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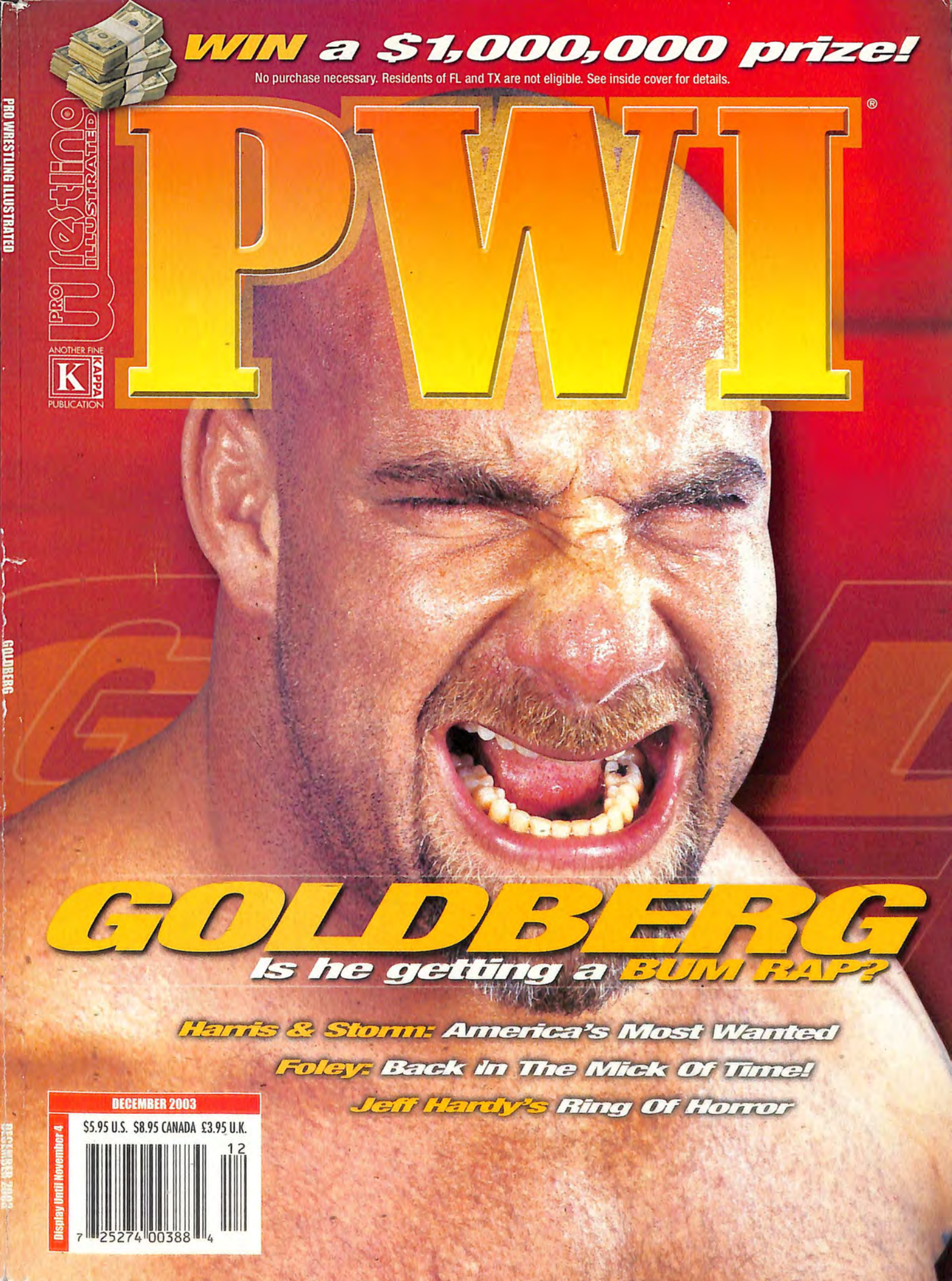

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6397

from the desk of...

VINDICATION WAS A mere two weeks away, and even though Triple-H wasn't at his best physically, suffering from a groin injury, he was not even considering begging out of his SummerSlam showdown with Bill Goldberg. He had waited too long for the opportunity. It had been three years since Goldberg took his best shot at Triple-H—with his mouth, from 30 feet away, in a public forum—and the Raw champion vividly remembers how frustrating it was to have to restrain himself. Under the circumstances, there was nothing he could do about it. Except wait.

And so he did. He knew one day he would settle this matter within the legal confines of a wrestling ring. In this sport, in spite of the politics that might prevent a particular matchup at a particular moment, eventually the matches the people want are made.

In hindsight, he was proud of himself for the way he controlled himself at that New York City licensing convention in June 2000 when Goldberg appeared out of nowhere and started firing obscenities at him and Stephanie McMahon. If he had made even the slightest move toward Goldberg, Goldberg would have felt compelled to do the same. By the time it was over, two professional wrestlers would have been escorted away by New York's Finest and the sport of pro wrestling would have received a black eye. To his credit, Triple-H calculated the consequences of his actions and quickly determined that he and his sport were best served by his inaction.

So he waited.

And ultimately, he was rewarded. Goldberg would be his at SummerSlam 2003.

Or so it was to be—until "Stone-Cold" Steve Austin came in and ruined everything.

Two weeks before SummerSlam, Goldberg was close to finishing off Ric Flair on *Raw*, when a run-in-fest including Randy Orton, Triple-H, Shawn Michaels, Chris Jericho, and Kevin Nash ensued. When the melee ended, Austin strolled out of the locker room, grabbed a house mike, and took it upon himself to "punish" these miscreants by changing the SummerSlam main event from Goldberg vs. Triple-H, one-on-one, to an "Elimination Chamber" match involving all but Flair.

As bad a call as this was, I'm not blaming Austin entirely. I hold responsible this ridiculous notion that those who can't wrestle must be a general manager or a commissioner or a president or a CEO or a chief of staff. The prevailing wisdom is that the likes of Eric Bischoff, Stephanie McMahon, and Steve Austin have far too much star power to not be given positions of authority. And what's the value of a position of authority if you can't exert that authority every chance you get?

So Austin makes his proclamation and feels all-powerful, but Goldberg is screwed, Triple-H is screwed, and whether WWE knows it or not, the fans are screwed as well. We've seen enough specialty matches over the years that they're just not special anymore. At this point, a classic one-on-one with a definitive conclusion is all we ask.

I confess to not having a solution to the problem. WWE is doing the right thing by keeping Bischoff, Steph, and Austin at the sport's forefront. They are terrific entertainers who need a public platform from which to best utilize their talents. They need to be out front, but many of their decisions seem to be made to keep them *in front*. As entertaining as these leaders are, it's still the wrestlers that the fans pay to see. And if the fans end up on the short end because someone isn't being forced to control his or her ego, the sport suffers and nobody's best interest is served.

Stu Saks
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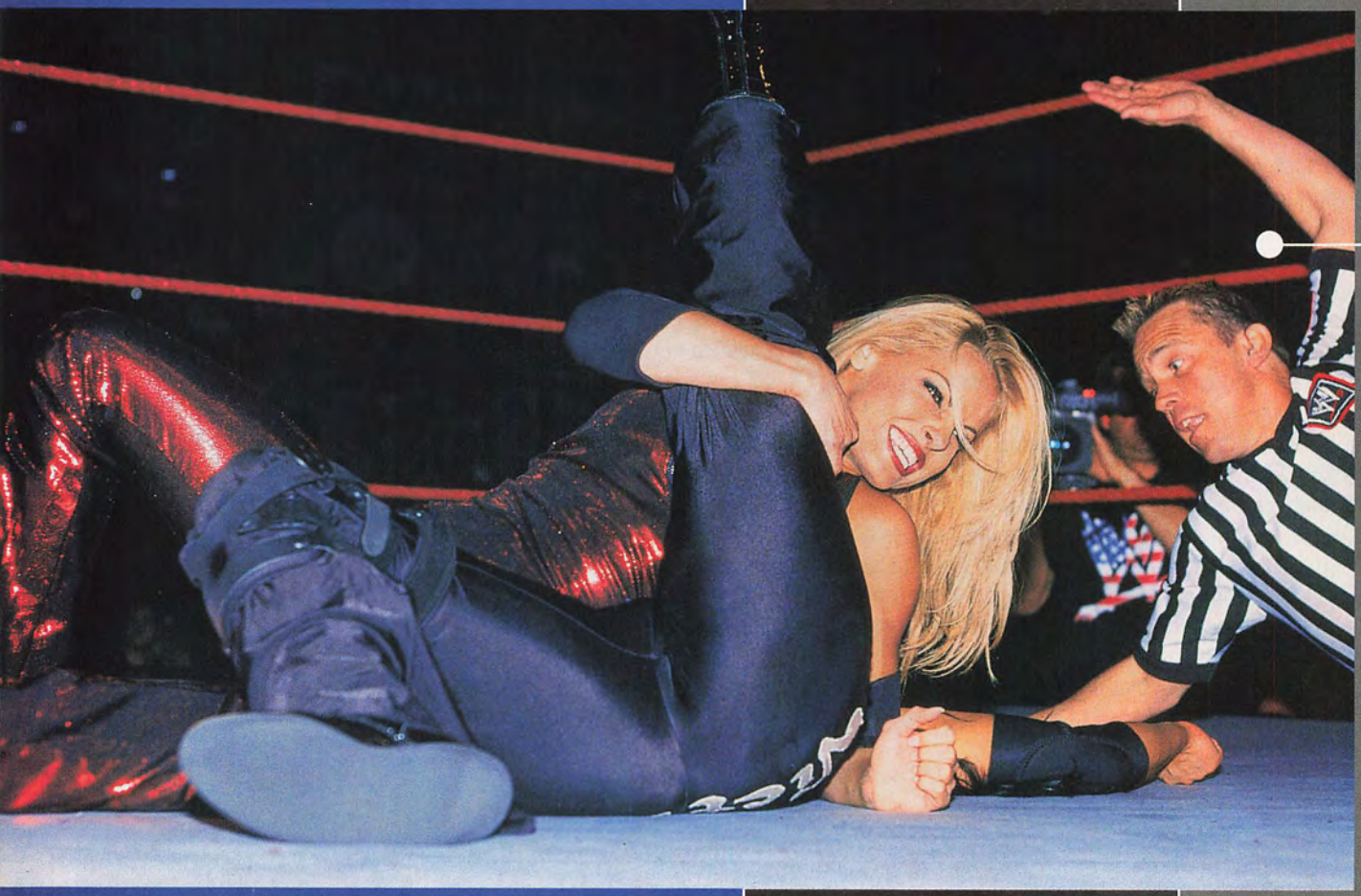


PWI®

December 2003

contents

features

24 **PRESS CONFERENCE: BILLY GUNN**
"Mr. Ass" has returned, but does that mean he'll reclaim his spot as one of WWE's hotter stars, too? He hopes so. Gunn discusses his past relationship with Chuck, his new relationship with Torrie, his goals, and a whole lot more

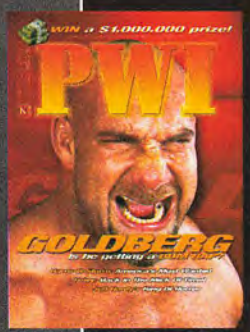
28 **CHRIS HARRIS & JAMES STORM: AMERICA'S MOST WANTED!**
They were virtual unknowns on their own, never accomplishing much of note. When TNA officials put them together a year ago, they had no idea that America's Most Wanted would make magic in the ring as a unit

32 **GOLDBERG: IS HE GETTING A BUM RAP?**
WWE CEO Linda McMahon came right out and said not long ago that he had been a disappointment so far. But whose fault has that been, "Da Man's" or his company's?

36 **JEFF HARDY'S RING OF HORROR: "WHAT HAVE I DONE TO MAKE THE FANS HATE ME?"**
Ring of Honor drew its biggest crowd ever in large part due to the fact that Hardy, only recently released by WWE, was making his first appearance. Much to his shock and dismay, he was nearly booed out of the building when he came out

40 **BACK IN THE MICK OF TIME ... TO TEACH THESE YOUNG-INS SOME RESPECT!**
Randy Orton, specifically, better be on alert. There are, however, a lot of other guys in WWE who could stand to be knocked down a peg or two. And Cactus Jack and Mankind could be lurking somewhere in the background as well

45 **ACHIEVEMENT AWARDS 2003: VOTE FOR THE YEAR'S BEST WRESTLERS AND MATCHES**
We have again reached the time of the year when we ask you to make your choices for wrestling's most prestigious honors—the *PWI* Achievement Awards. We've made lists of what and who we think are the top candidates in each of 11 categories



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LOOK FOR THE JANUARY 2004 ISSUE OF *PWI* ON SALE NOVEMBER 4, 2003

departments

3 **FROM THE DESK OF ... Stu Saks**
It's time that wrestling's "leaders" learned their role

8 **BEFORE THE BELL**
A midget-only promotion, "Internet Insider," crazy quotes, more!

12 **RINGSIDE with Will Welsh**
The latest on Eddie Guerrero, Jim Ross, RVD, TNA, and more

16 **IN FOCUS by Dave Lenker**
Stars who are too bad to be booed, and what happened to Ultimo?

18 **OFF THE TOP ROPE with Brandi Mankiewicz**
Mail call for our very own "Queen"

20 **KREW-CUTS by Frank Krewda**
The wrestling moves we need to see more (and less) of

58 **THE BUSINESS PAGE by Harry Burkett**
The major business stories, WWE stockwatch, and a ratings rundown

62 **THE STEEL CAGE by Liz Hunter**
Defending the NWA champ, the strange reappearance of Superstar Graham, more

64 **WIN, LOSE, OR DRAW by Harry Burkett**
A bittersweet night, as a *successful* indy promotion closes its doors

66 **THE STRAIGHT SHOOTER by Dan Murphy**
Three Live Crew: a wrestling clique that's at its best away from the ring

68 **THE WRESTLING ANALYST**
We place former WWE women's champ Jazz under our microscope

72 **SUPERSTARS & SUPERBOUTS**
Ah, the memories the Von Erichs and Freebirds gave us!

76 **THE ULTIMATE WRESTLER**
We've created yet another twisted creature for you to figure out

78 **12 QUESTIONS WITH ... C.M. PUNK**
We regretted asking him why he bleeds so much

80 **FANTASTIC FINISHERS**
Taking an in-depth look at the Asai moonsault (a.k.a. lionsault)

82 **THROUGH THE YEARS: THE VINCE McMAHON FILES**
We go back more than 30 years with these pictures

84 ***WRESTLING OBSERVER* HALL OF FAME**
It's time ... it's time ... for us to spotlight Vader

86 **INDEPENDENT ROUNDUP by Liz Hunter**
What's been happening on some of the smaller shows

88 **THE INTERNATIONAL REPORT by Mike Spillane**
Lots of news from Japan, Mexico, Puerto Rico, and more

92 **ARENA REPORTS**
Key results from around the world, plus our "Spotlight" card

100 ***PWI* CLASSIC**
Our "*PWI* 500" advice (in 1995) to the woman we now know as Jacquelyn

106 **BETWEEN FALLS**
Touched By An Angle; Lesnar Off The Mark; Need More Dinsmore

108 **OFFICIAL WRESTLING RATINGS**
The mat sport's most respected rankings

110 **RATINGS ANALYSIS**
There are things about our ratings that need to be analyzed

112 **DRAWING BLOOD**
Featuring the outlandish artwork of Jason "Mr. J" Conlan

114 **WOW! CHECK OUT THIS SHOT!**
B.J. Whitmer gets stuck in a compromising position

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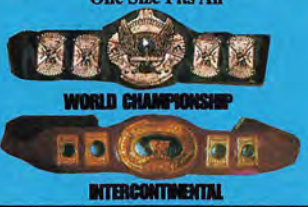

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Compiled by Will Welsh

Little-Known Federations

Professional wrestling is in a constant state of flux. Just like so many other industries, it's always trying to reinvent itself in an attempt to make it more market-friendly and to attract more fans to the arenas. For example, in the mid-1990s, ECW popularized extreme wrestling. In the late-1990s, WWE's "Attitude" campaign introduced us to raunch wrestling.

In 2003, the Micro Wrestling Federation—a promotion featuring midget wrestling and only midget wrestling—is ushering along what it hopes will be the newest wrestling phenomenon: niche wrestling. Short Sleeve Sampson, Lil' Killa (pictured choking Sampson), John E. Fresh, Pitbull Patterson, and Blixx are among the stars you could be lucky enough to see if the MWF ever comes to a town near you. In addition to wrestling, MWF shows often feature "Kiss The Midget" and "Imitate A Wrestler" segments, as well as the always-popular "Inch-Worm Race."

"The Micro Wrestling Federation is the *only* all 'Little Person' wrestling organization in the world," notes the promotion's Web site, www.microwrestling.com. "That's right, all performers in the MWF are under five foot tall! The MWF is a national unique brand of wrestling specializing in a one-of-a-kind-type entertainment with the famous little people seldom seen anywhere else in the world of wrestling today!"

MWF officials may not have known what they were doing, but by creating this promotion, they have unofficially started wrestling's newest age. Pretty soon, they'll be promotions dedicated to the smallest niche markets you can imagine! Of course, not wanting to miss out on the fun, here's our list of the top three can't-miss niche promotions that could (but probably won't) be coming to an arena near you:

The AACF (The Actors and Actresses Coalition Federation): Hollywood isn't known for its appreciation of wrestling, but it sure must hate the way that wrestling, reality TV, and The Rock have been eating up revenue in recent years. That's why actors from acting's three biggest genres (TV, film, and stage) will band together to create their own promotion. The match we're most looking toward: The cast of *Friends* vs. The Terminator, Predator, King Kong, Godzilla, Jason, and Christopher Walken. Let the bloodletting begin.

The UBTL (The Under Buck Ten League): Wrestling, like most other sports, is generally a big man's game. Not anymore. We propose the Under Buck Ten League, where the only qualification to wrestle is that you must weigh less than 110 pounds. A backyarder's dream come true! Males and females are both welcome. Not only will this league discourage the use of illegal growth hormones, just imagine how brutal these matches will get when our weaklings get to unleash 30 or 40 years of pent-up fury!

WOW (World of Wrestling): Although none of them say it, our world leaders are tired of having to kowtow to the workings of diplomacy when all they want to do is get in the ring and tussle. Now it can happen. Of course, we can't let the outcomes of these matches completely ruin today's current world order, so we must implement one rule: Every ruler gets one ringside attendant for every one million citizens under his care. Can you say, "Brawl For All"?

Talkin' Trash

Here's a list of the top 10 wrestling-related things you've been talking about lately, and our gut reaction to each:

10. Mick Foley's first novel, *Tietam Brown*, hits store shelves. We read this book three times for an Al Snow joke, and we couldn't find one! *Not one!*

9. Billy Kidman and Torrie Wilson get married. Maybe you didn't hear about this one, but it makes for pretty interesting news, especially since another Billy, Mr. Gunn, has been playing kissy-face with Torrie on WWE TV.

8. TNN is finally allowed to change its name to Spike TV. We're not sure what took so long. TNN executives just should have had Brock Lesnar pay a visit to Spike Lee's offices to "negotiate" a resolution.

7. Shannon Ward (the former in Daffney in WCW) signs a developmental deal with WWE. Here's a piece of advice for Ohio Valley Wrestling promoter Jim Cornette: Get earplugs. Lots of them. This girl can scream!

6. Rob Van Dam opens a comic book store in Lakewood, California. We knew that RVD always wanted to open a business establishment, but we have to admit that we're a bit surprised he went with a comic book store and not a head shop.

5. WWE brings back the old WCW U.S. heavyweight title. As long as WWE doesn't bring back some of the old U.S. champions, such as One Man Gang and Steve McMichael, we're okay with that decision.

4. TNN's 100 Most Irresistible Women lists Stacy Keibler at number 81. Only 81? No higher than 81? What were they thinking? Drop the "8" and leave the "1," baby!

3. Bill Goldberg misses a couple of weeks of action due to an infection in his arm. WWE should look at the bright side: At least this latest injury wasn't caused by Goldberg smashing his arm through a car window.

2. Gail Kim wins the WWE women's championship in her TV debut. Why was that so shocking? Isn't she from the world of *The Matrix?* Given that, how could she lose?

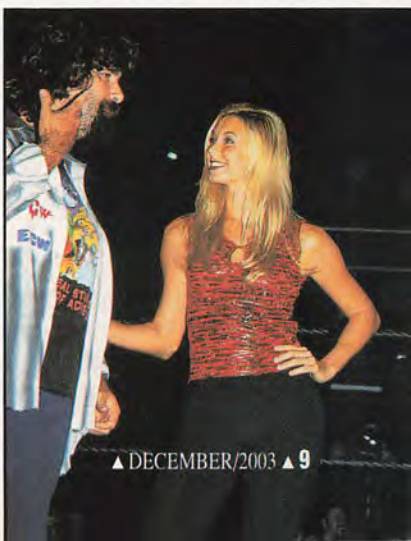
1. Kane removes his mask and reveals to the world that he isn't actually scarred. What's next? Are we going to find out that he's not really The Undertaker's half-brother ... or Paul Bearer's illegitimate son?

The Internet Insider

The following news items were culled from various wrestling-related Web sites—or were they? See if you can pick out the two items that were actually reported on the Internet (which don't necessarily mean that they are true) and the two that we blatantly made up. The answers appear at the end of this column on page 11.

1. Rapper I.M. Krazy has filed a lawsuit against WWE and John Cena. In his suit, Krazy, a little-known rapper who says he distributes his music over the Internet, claims that Cena stole lyrics from multiple songs and performed them on WWE TV. He's seeking damages upward of $500,000. In response, WWE lawyers filed a countersuit citing defamation. In the countersuit, WWE indicates that Krazy's suit is preposterous, because they don't believe he was sitting at home rapping about WWE wrestlers.

2. During a recent plane ride, Stacy Keibler told Mick Foley that after she read his book *Foley Is Good,* she felt sorry for Test because of the way Foley continually ripped on him for his poor acting ability. She went on to say that Foley's comments were one of the reasons she and Test got together, because she was predisposed to liking him. Afterward, Keibler's comments had a dressing room



full of wrestlers wishing that Foley had made fun of them in one of his books.

3. Before his scheduled appearance to throw out the first pitch at a New York Yankees baseball game in June, current NWA-TNA creative team member Vince Russo was stopped in the dugout by portly Yankees pitcher David Wells. Wells, obviously a fan of professional wrestling, put his finger in Russo's chest and told him, "Don't screw this up like you did WCW," and then walked off.

4. Apparently never content to focus entirely on wrestling, Vince McMahon and WWE recently paid what was reported to be a high six-figure sum for a movie screenplay penned by veteran Hollywood writer Alan McElroy that will be developed by WWE Films. Unfortunately, some of the man's recent projects haven't exactly been box office bonanzas, leading many to worry that this will be yet another "non-wrestling" flop for the company that refuses to learn from mistakes such as the XFL and World Bodybuilding Federation.

This Month in Wrestling History

December

December 26, 1902: Dan McLeod defeats Tom Jenkins in Worcester, Massachusetts, to regain the American heavyweight championship. Jenkins took the first fall in 59:00, while McLeod came back to win the second fall at 24:00. Jenkins forfeited the match and the title 20 minutes into the third fall due to a leg injury. (Well, there are worse ways to lose a title, such as being screwed over by your promoter, right, Bret?)

December 1, 1906: Arguably the biggest upset in pro wrestling history to that point sees Fred Beell, outweighed by 50 pounds, beat Frank Gotch in New Orleans, Louisiana, to win the American heavyweight championship. Beell won the third fall by throwing Gotch over the edge of the mat, with Gotch striking his head on the floor. When the dazed Gotch was returned to the ring, Beell finished him off fast to take the title. (Okay, what we want to know is this: Who "returned" Gotch to the ring? Beell's manager ... or valet?)

December 13, 1920: Ed "Stranger" Lewis beats Joe Stetcher in 1:41:56 at the 71st Regiment Armory in New York to win the World title for the first time. (The fact that this match was held at an armory still dismays wrestling historians. After all, why would anyone let a world title change hands on an indy show?)

December 26, 1990: Super Strong Machine and Hiro Saito beat Hiroshi Hase and Kensuke Sasaki to win New Japan Pro Wrestling's IWGP International tag team title. (If Saito's partner had been Really Weak Machine, we imagine things would have turned out quite differently.)

December 18, 2002: David Flair and The Road Warriors debut in NWA-TNA, as Flair joins Vince Russo's Sports Entertainment Xtreme group, and The Road Warriors join Bob Armstrong's band of old schoolers. (And the edge after those two huge signings went to ... Armstrong's band of old schoolers, albeit just *barely.)*

We Heard That!

"It's so cool because in some situations, you create characters and storylines. Nathan comes with his own."

—Vince McMahon, discussing Nathan Jones' crime-ridden past, in an interview with the Australian version of *60 Minutes*

"My personal relationship with 'Stone-Cold,' and I'd be the first to admit it, has probably been a conflict of interest. I should not have those personal feelings about any talent in my role as head of talent, but it just happened that we're buddies and developed a friendship."

—Jim Ross, in an interview with the *Kingston Whig-Standard*

"I had to convince [Vince McMahon] that before it was done, it really wasn't that big a deal. And that was probably the biggest success in that I did a heck of a sales job and told him that I would be in very little danger at all."

—Mick Foley, discussing his "Hell In A Cell" cage fall in an interview with the *Pro Wrestling Torch*

"There's not a character with as much depth as mine with the capability to go in so many different directions. Even the guys who can't stand me in

the locker room agree to that."
—Raven, in an interview with wrestlingobserver.com

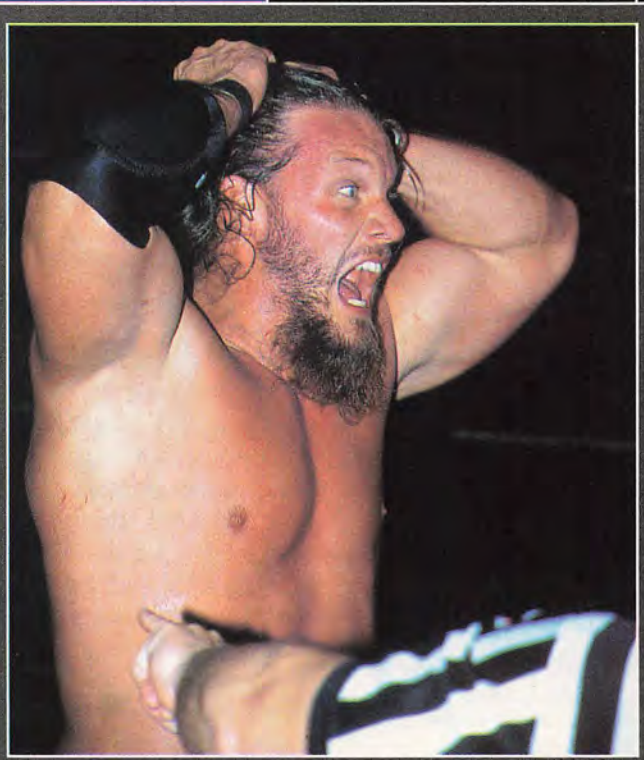
"Coming to [Madison Square Garden] is always something you look forward to, especially if you've ever been in the middle of the arena in the ring and the place is sold out. The fans here are the greatest in the world, but you have to entertain them. They let you know if they're not being entertained. It always gets you going 150 percent when you walk into the Garden. When you think back to all the people that ever performed here—whether it be Frank Sinatra, the circus, the NBA, the NHL, wrestling—all the great names that stood out there, and here you are in the middle of the ring, with a sold out crowd, in the main event. There's nothing like Madison Square Garden. Nothing like it in the world."

—WWE agent (and former World heavyweight champion) Sgt. Slaughter, in an interview with wwe.com

caption me!

Think you're a better writer than the editors at *PWI*? Here's your chance to prove it, punk! This 1998 photo of Vince McMahon whispering sweet nothings into Mike Tyson's ear is begging for a short, concise, and downright uproarious caption. If you think you're up to the task, e-mail your zany quips to prowrestlingillustrated@yahoo.com, or slap a stamp on an envelope and snail-mail it to "Caption Me!" Box 1148, Fort Washington, PA 19034. Three issues from now, we'll share with you the best of the bunch—and the funnier the better.

August's Best



"Here's my Goldberg impression …"
—Allan Marshall, East Kilbride, Scotland

"I'm not going to pay a lot for this muffler!"
—Michael Donato, Bohemia, NY

"Piper, put your shirt back on. You're scaring all of my Jerichoholics."
—Scott Evans, s_evans5@bellsouth.net

"Holy ass clown! Triple-H lost a match!"
—Daniel Collins, Liverpool, England

"Oh my God! I have split ends! I will never … *eeeeeever* … use that conditioner again!"
—LuchaMisFit73@aol.com

"Not Metallica … please … not Metallica!"
—William Holden, Trenton, GA

Answers to Internet Insider:

Items 1 and 3 are totally made up.

ringside

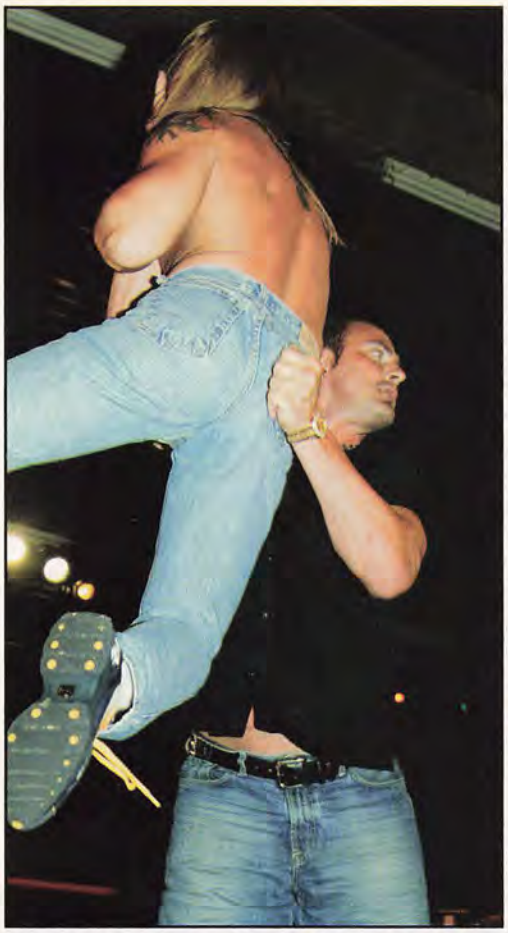
With Will Welsh

DEPENDING ON WHOM you talk with, the biggest news coming out of WWE's Vengeance pay-per-view was either **Kurt Angle's** victory over **The Big Show** and **Brock Lesnar** to reclaim the Smackdown championship or **Vince McMahon's** bloody deconstruction of **Zach Gowen**. While the results of those two matches certainly are noteworthy, the biggest news from Vengeance to me basically got lost in the mix. Because **Eddie Guerrero's** defeat of **Chris Benoit** in the finals of the U.S. title tournament came in the pay-per-view's opening match, most fans had already forgotten about the result by the time the main event rolled around more than two hours later.

That's a shame, because Guerrero and Benoit were the perfect two wrestlers to reintroduce wrestling fans to the U.S. heavyweight title, whose lineage is as strong as that of just about any other title being defended today. Go ahead and pick up a *PWI Almanac* if you want proof. Men such as **Ric Flair**, **"Rowdy" Roddy Piper**, **Wahoo McDaniel**, **Rick Steamboat**, **Tully Blanchard**, **Magnum T.A.**, **Nikita Koloff**, **Dusty Rhodes**, **Vader**, **Sting**, **Kensuke Sasaki**, and **Bret Hart** all held the title at one point or another during their careers. So did **"Stone-Cold" Steve Austin**, who was WCW's U.S. heavyweight champion from December 27, 1993, until August 24, 1994. It was a championship that any catch-as-catch-can wrestler would have been proud to hold, and at some times, it was even held in higher regard than WCW's World championship—especially during the years when **Hulk Hogan** dominated the promotion but rarely defended the World title.

As for Guerrero, his win at Vengeance made him a two-time U.S. champion. I can only hope it'll also make him a legitimate entrant into Smackdown's top tier. He might not have the size of The Big Show or Brock Lesnar, but neither does Kurt Angle—and he's the most respected wrestler in the sport today. If given a real push instead of one of the

Although they were overshadowed by a lot of the other happenings at Vengeance, Eddie Guerrero and Chris Benoit turned in an outstanding match for the reactivated U.S. title. Was Guerrero's win step one in his elevation to Smackdown's top tier?



Erik Watts (shown against Kid Kash) surprised NWA-TNA fans when he revealed in July that the "Eric" he was introducing as TNA's "director of authority" was ... him!

half-hearted ones we've become accustomed to seeing, Guerrero vs. Angle or Guerrero vs. Lesnar could headline a Smackdown brand pay-per-view in the very near future.

NWA-TNA keeps changing up its roster, and with every change, it seems to get better and better. Some of the latest additions include **Legend** (who has wrestled as **Joe E. Legend** and **Just Joe** in previous lives), **Mad Mikey** (the former **Crash Holly**), and **Don "Cyrus" Callis**, **Simon Diamond**, and **Johnny Swinger** of ECW fame. Also, the influence of **Vince Russo** seems to be lessening, as TNA officials have mandated that swearing and male-on-female violence, two of the promotions more disturbing hallmarks, are to be lessened, if not outright eliminated.

However, not everything is completely grand in Nashville. One of the promotion's more ridiculous storylines, the **Erik Watts** mystery, which has featured Watts hooking up with **Goldylocks** while also promising that the same Eric who was in WCW when he was there, "**DDP's** best friend, Eric" was going to be joining TNA as the director of authority, finally came to a conclusion on the July 23 pay-per-view. Although Watts had seemingly been referring to **Eric Bischoff**, the former WCW president and current co-general manager of WWE's Raw brand, in his remarks, Watts declared himself the new director of authority in a not-so-very-clever swerve. Oddly enough, a contingent of old school NWA wrestling personalities, including **Harley Race**, **Rick Morton**, and **Larry Zbyszko**, appeared to endorse Watts in his new position.

To be honest, I'm not sure where this storyline is headed, and I'm not sure I care. Watts has shown good intensity when he's been given chances to wrestle on TNA PPVs, but the schizophrenic booking of his character has given me multiple headaches. Watts needs to slow down and let us know what he's trying to accomplish, because up until now, he's been painfully difficult to watch.

As I'm sure you saw, on the July 14 *Raw,* the newly unmasked **Kane** set *Raw* play-by-play announcer **Jim Ross** on fire, requiring ol' J.R. to miss time behind *Raw's* announcing desk for the third time this year. Some wrestling insiders are pointing to a conspiracy theory that's (1) meant to get Ross away from the announce desk permanently, and/or (2) meant to get **Jonathan Coachman** behind it permanently. I can't buy either theory. Coachman sure as heck isn't ready to call *Raw* on a weekly basis, and Ross is still the best play-by-play man in the business. Sure, *Smackdown's* **Michael Cole** has improved mightily and would probably be number two even if WCW and ECW were still around, but Ross has been so good for so long that he's instantly recognizable as WWE's voice. He's this generation's **Gordon Solie**, and I don't ever remember anyone calling for that legendary man's dismissal.

Now, if WWE had other, more seasoned play-by-play men on the roster, such as **Joey Styles** or **Tony Schiavone**, to utilize, I might be more likely to believe this conspiracy theory, but that isn't the case. With only Coachman, **Marc Loyd**, and **Josh Matthews** in training, and possibly years away from being ready for such an important slot, Ross means more to Raw than any of the brand's mid-carders and

Considering all his responsibilities as head of talent relations, Jim Ross (shown here with OVW promoter Jim Cornette) is a busy man, but he is perhaps most valuable as a Raw broadcaster. Don't expect him to give up that job anytime soon.

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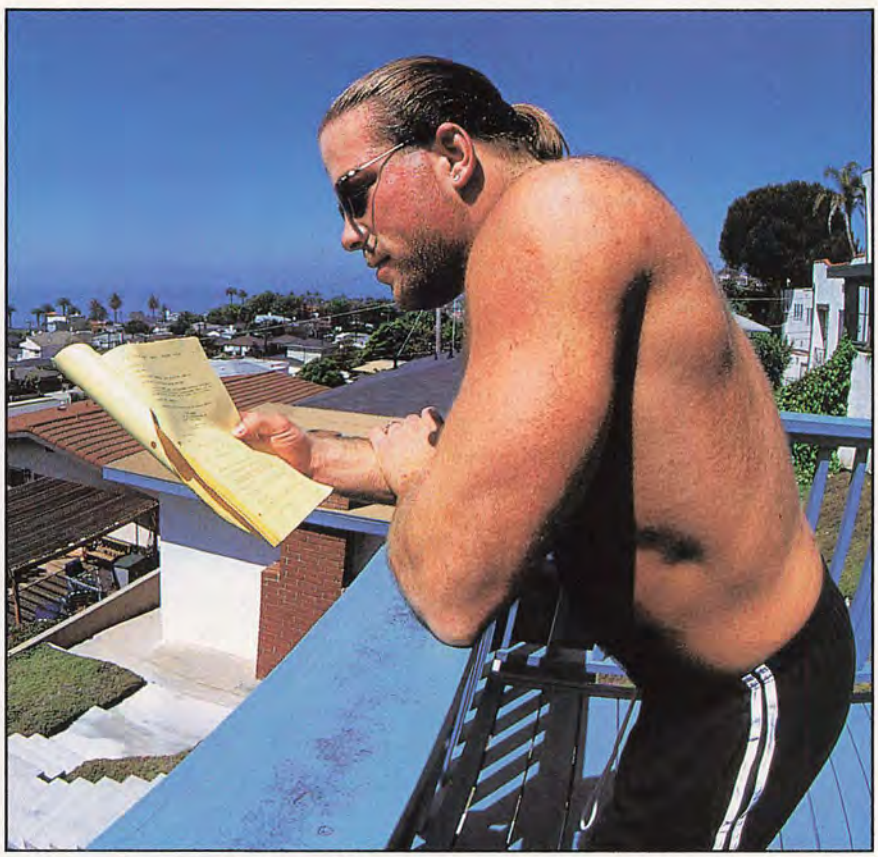
even some of the main-eventers.

You know, this is just a thought, but has anyone considered that ol' J.R. just might like to enjoy the fruits of his success and take a vacation (or two or three)?

America's Most Wanted, **Chris Harris** and **James Storm**, have signed long-term deals with NWA-TNA. Congrats to both men and to TNA officials, who simply couldn't let the promotion lose the valuable three-time NWA tag team champions ... Smackdown's Far East tour went extremely well. The four shows (one in Thailand and three in Japan) played to large, enthusiastic audiences, and the response that Smackdown's wrestlers received was tremendous. New Japan's **Bob Sapp** had better hope that Brock Lesnar remains with WWE for a very long time (a lot of people in Japan consider this a dream match) ... In addition to Crash Holly, WWE recently released **Terry Taylor**, who had been working behind the scenes as an agent.

How bad did NWA-TNA officials cringe when they heard this: During a radio interview, NWA champion **A.J. Styles** said that although he enjoys both, he prefers wrestling for Ring of Honor over NWA-TNA because ROH's style isn't so entertainment-driven. I'm sure Styles didn't mean that as an insult, but if TNA officials are smart, they'll find a way to clamp down on their wrestlers putting even what could be construed as the bad mouth on the promotion in interviews, because it makes the promotion look second-rate (especially when the NWA champion does it) ... **Rob Van Dam** is creating a comic book entitled *Twisted Perception*. RVD won't commit to a date that it will hit store shelves, but he says the four-part series will debut soon ... NWA-TNA is expanding its business outside the ring. **Konnan** and **Armando Quintaro** now broadcast every TNA pay-per-view in Spanish, and the company says that it also has a video game in the works.

That does it for me this month, fans. Enjoy your wanderings. □



Bet you didn't realize RVD was so versatile. Wrestler ... part-time actor ... and now comic book creator?

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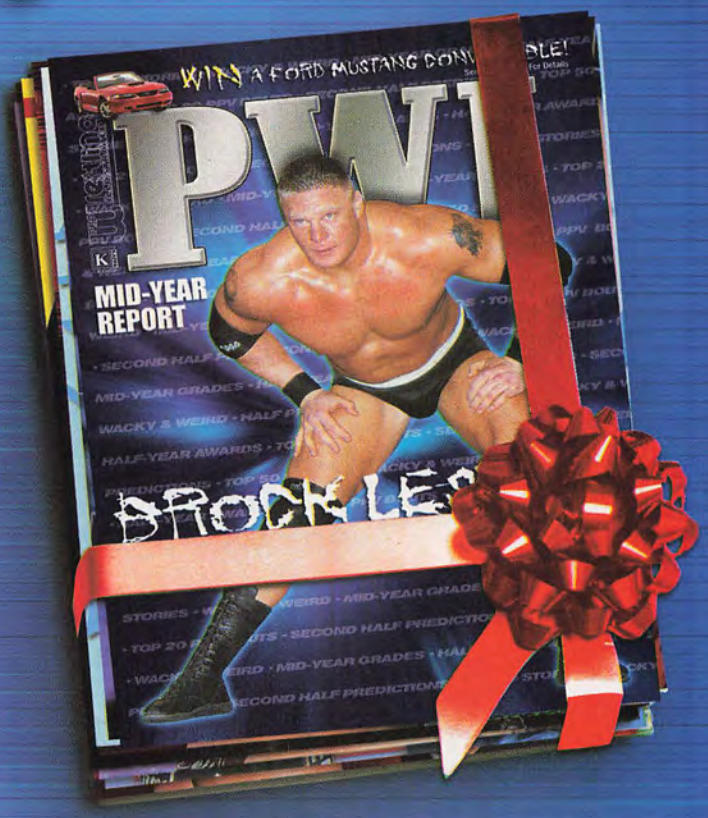

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in focus

By Dave Lenker

TOO BAD TO BE BOOED

What did you do, Steve Austin? It's been about six years since the term anti-hero became an important part of the wrestling lexicon, about six years since people like Vince Russo started questioning whether those epic battles of clear-cut good vs. downright evil in wrestling had become passe. That debate, by the way, still rages on in 2003.

And wrestlers who buck authority and don't follow the rules still get cheered six years later, louder than ever. And I'm trying to figure out what it takes to get booed by your average WWE crowd. Seriously, I didn't hear many boos directed Kane's way the week after he barbecued Jim Ross. And the chants of Eddie Guerrero's name only got louder after he used Tajiri's face to bang out the dents on the hood of his lowrider. The explanation that the cheers are just a result of him being such a great wrestler, heel or not, doesn't wash. If it does, why did the technically splendid Chris Benoit get booed every time he dared to insult Eddie?

These are heinous acts, people! We're talking attempted homicide and battery here!

It didn't hit me until Kane came shuffling down the aisle in chains that not too many years ago, a lot of fans still would have been cowering at the sight of a monster like Kane seven days after watching an incident as ghastly as the J.R. roasting.

And Eddie? He ruined the perfectly good, popular, and exciting tag team he had going with Tajiri and without due cause (as if there could ever be due cause for such an attack) busted him up all over his car. Never apologized. Just kept right on lying, cheating, and stealing as if the Tajiri incident never happened.

Eddie Guerrero trashed Tajiri for no good reason after they lost the Smackdown tag title, but that didn't position him as a heel in the eyes of most fans. Dave Lenker suggests that WWE give fans what they want and let Eddie be a babyface.

It's been 15 long years since I last took a college course in psychology or sociology, so I won't be accused of being an expert on human behavior. I don't know if it reflects poorly on our society when such ne'er-do-wells are treated like heroes and don't particularly care, but I do know it's time WWE starts listening closely to its fans again … some of the time.

There are times to be patient with your creative plans and time to give the people what they want right now, dammit! People wanted to cheer the heel Steve Austin in 1997, and eventually the company gave in and allowed him to officially turn. People wanted to cheer the trash-talking Rock in '98, and WWE quickly gave in. They wanted to boo The Rock by the time he left for Hollywood last summer, so he was brought back as a heel. They wanted to cheer Lesnar last summer, so he was turned. In each of those cases, people were either creating a villain or hero they hadn't seen before at all or, in the case of Rock last year, a man

they hadn't had license to boo in a long time.

Enter Eddie G. Save for his tremendously entertaining run with Chyna a few years back, he hasn't gotten much of a chance to show WWE fans what he can do as a babyface, and certainly not as a dangerous babyface on the rise. Well, Vinnie Mac, the people are telling you what they want. They want to cheer on Eddie as he lies, cheats, and steals his way to win after win after win. Here's hoping you still listen.

Conversely, the rebuilding of Kane as a monster will require patience (and, we have to hope, a little more logic). If WWE does a good enough job of rebuilding Kane, people will come to see someone slay that dragon, many months from now. Maybe you can even coax Austin out of retirement for that one more special match at WrestleMania XX. Give up on that project now and sure, you'll get a few cheap pops as Kane choke-slams the evildoers on the Raw roster, but then you're right back to the same stale Kane we've been watching for years, just without the silly mask. Then we'd all have to conveniently forget what he did to Ross as Ross marveled at what an awesome superstar he is and how he courageously conquered his demons.

If that happens, the unmasking will have served no purpose.

ULTIMO LETDOWN?

WWE doesn't produce vignettes for every soon-to-be-debuting superstar and air them ad nauseum. That can be a good thing and a bad thing. Good in that it lets the audience know that stars who get the full video treatment before they arrive are to be treated like something special. Bad in that it lets the audience know that stars who don't get the full video treatment before they arrive are to be treated like something less than special.

Vignettes suggested that Gail Kim was going to be a big star when she finally made her *Raw* debut. She won the women's title in her first televised match.

The Basham Brothers' arrival wasn't even worth plugging in advance. They're building nice careers for themselves on *Velocity.* I think.

Mr. America's debut on *Smackdown,* we were shown and told, was not to be missed. We found out why when we saw him and figured out who was behind the mask, brother.

Mark Jindrak's return from Ohio Valley Wrestling wasn't worth promoting ahead of time. He's now teaming with Garrison Cade, who was treated like a prelim bum in his first match on *Raw.* I expect their feud with Steven Richards and a partner of his choosing to erupt any week now on *Sunday Night Heat.*

You get the point. What I don't get is that after he got the star video package treatment for months, made his TV debut inside Madison Square Garden, and bumped into reigning cruiserweight champ Rey Misterio Jr. on that very same night, Ultimo Dragon has been pushed down to the FBI level of the Smackdown roster. A few not-so-decisive wins on *Smackdown* and now he makes the Thursday night cut only if he's lucky. I've heard the rumors of him supposedly not "adjusting to the WWE style," and if that's true, I just haven't been watching his matches closely enough. I haven't seen a bad effort from him in WWE yet. And I can't recall any of our correspondents around the country reporting that a single one of his house show bouts was anything close to poor, regardless of the opponent.

I thought Misterio and Dragon were on course for a SummerSlam sizzler of a match. But now Billy Kidman has jumped in front of him in line, assuming Dragon is still in line at all. I have to hope that Ultimo is just being given ample time to adjust to WWE and test his bad elbow before he gets his megapush leading up to Survivor Series or WrestleMania. If not, what was all the hype about?

(Have a comment or question about "In Focus" or anything else you see in ***PWI?*** *You can contact Dave Lenker via e-mail at dave_lenker@yahoo.com.)* □

Ultimo Dragon all but disappeared from *Smackdown* within a month of making his WWE TV debut against Shannon Moore. Considering the hype that debut got, that seemed strange.

off the top rope

By Brandi Mankiewicz

If you wish to contribute to Brandi's mailbag, send your letters to:
TOP ROPE Box 1148 Ft. Washington, PA 19034
Or send e-mail to: **offthetoprope@yahoo.com**

(Editor's note: The opinions expressed in this column are those of the letter writers and Brandi Mankiewicz herself. They do not necessarily reflect the editorial views of this magazine.)

IT'S LATE-SUMMER here in crappy suburban Filthadelphia, but it's already time to cast your ballots for this year's Achievement Awards. Why so early? Why not? We know you idiots already have your favorites in each category. You rarely swerve from them for any reason. It makes you so predictable. I beg you to think about each category with an unbiased mind and make your choices without the influence of your little heart. Don't let the posters on your walls influence you, either. You just might find that the perfect candidate for a certain award is someone completely different than what your heart is telling you.

I know you'll all pick Triple-H as your Most Hated, but what will be the real reason? Will it be the incredible job he's been doing as Raw's top heel, or will it be your distaste for his choice in women? Marrying the boss' daughter isn't a bad thing when you both have a singular passion for the business that brought you together in the first place.

Remember, my minions, you can always write in your own choices for each category as well. A Woman of the Year vote for Dan Murphy wouldn't be too far from the truth. A Most Hated vote for me just proves my theory: I am your champion.

Brandi,

Let me start by saying that anybody that writes to criticize your work is a dullard. I find your witticisms rather restrained in the face of such incomprehensible letters and e-mails as you receive. That most of those letters seem to come from people with virtually no grasp of phoenetics whatsoever should be considered proof that you are often forced to tolerate the lowest common denominator.

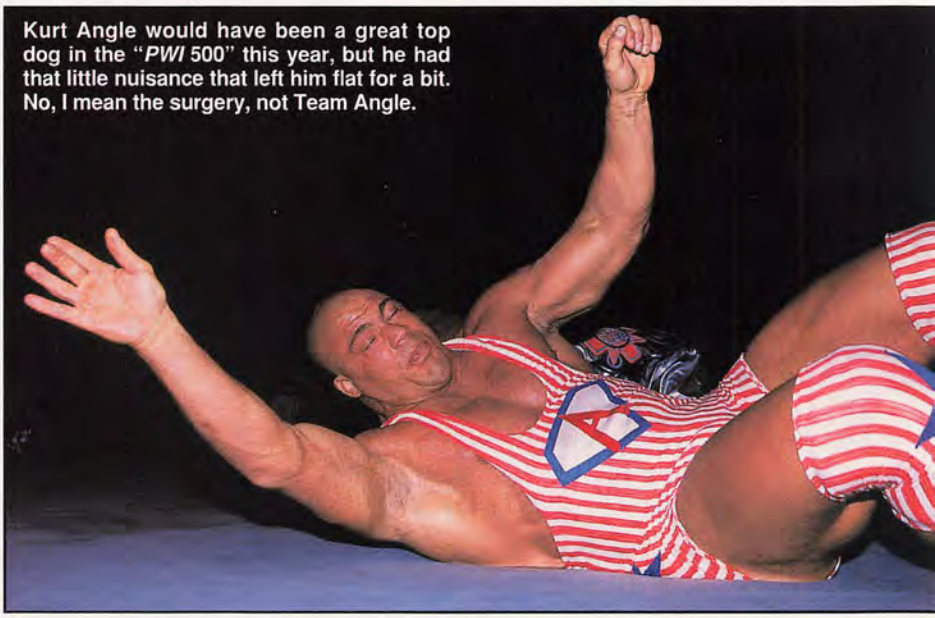
Anyhow, I was just wondering who your pick to top the next "*PWI* 500" will be. This year has so many good candidates, yet each has serious strikes against him. Brock Lesnar has been astounding, but is destined to fall without developing some kind of persona beyond being really big and strong (Lord knows, that's not helping A-Train top the list). Chris Benoit has been amazing in the ring, but has no major titles to his credit. Angle sat out for about two months, which could hurt him. Triple-H has made the Raw title seem like an absolute joke, and has spent considerable time on the DL without dropping his title. Jericho and RVD have both been buried in mid-card purgatory. Undertaker has been out injured, and hasn't held a major title in a while. Eddie Guerrero is completely rejuvenated, but can he pull of a Melenko-like upset? Keiji Muto is showing signs of slowing down, though he still performs at a high level. Yuji Nagata is brilliant, but still relatively unheralded. So where do you stand on all of this?

Sincerely,

BEN NONAKA
Orland Park, IL

Eddie Haskell,

Let me start by acknowledging that you need to spend less time adhering your lips to my ass and more time reading a dictionary. Only then will you realize the spelling mistakes you made in your letter. I left "phonetics" and "Malenko" spelled improperly in your letters just to prove my point. I already made my pick for number one in the "*PWI* 500" when I played ring leader for the circus we call the "500 meeting." Brock was amazing this year and he deserved to get the top spot. Now let's run down your list of characters. The only thing amazing about Benoit is



Kurt Angle would have been a great top dog in the "*PWI* 500" this year, but he had that little nuisance that left him flat for a bit. No, I mean the surgery, not Team Angle.

that he continues to draw a paycheck from Vince. Angle could have very well been the top dog this year, but he had that boo boo. Triple-H was dominant, but you fans crap all over him too much. Jericho, RVD, and Eddie Guerrero don't deserve to be anywhere near the top 10 when there are independent wrestlers who have accomplished so much more this year than all of them combined. Undie is a strong presence, but he'd be better off riding that motorcycle to the nearest old age home instead of to the ring. As for Muto and Nagata, I predict that there is no way my fellow editors or typical American fans will ever see the brilliance of the *puroresu* wrestlers enough to deem one of them number one.

If Vince wants to bring in a controversial busty beauty to shake up the roster, why not bring in the queen of notoriety, Missy Hyatt? She is so much better than Sable, and you know that she'd be willing to do almost anything for a buck.

Dear Brandi,

I can't believe it! Is Ultimo Dragon really back? Like, for good? WWE got a bunch of idiots like Goldberg, Scott Steiner, Sable, and Roddy Piper, but I can't believe that they actually made the decision that people really wanted and brought back one of the coolest wrestlers in the world.

JESSE BOWMAN
Crozzbonez2000@yahoo.com

Dear Jesse,

Seeing Ultimo Dragon in an American ring again is definitely a highlight of this year for me. Unfortunately, I doubt the Ent will know what to do with him—and, more importantly, whether he will be able to live up to his lofty reputation. He is still wrestling with a bum arm. I just hope he doesn't tarnish his legacy by losing to Charlie Haas.

On a personal note, I suggest you find a hobby that doesn't involve filling my e-mail account with your bad grammar. In terms you might understand, like, you have to stop writing me so many letters. You're a pest.

Hello, Brandi!

I have two quick questions for you: First, what is your opinion of The Rock? Second, if you could fire just one WWE wrestler, who would it be? Thank you for your time.

PETER
zeptron@excite.co
P.S. Victoria rules!

Peter!

I could make this easy and conclude that the Ent should fire The Rock, but that's not it. His promos are fairly entertaining. For the Raw side, I'd fire Stacy Keibler. There is no reason she should be collecting a paycheck from a wrestling promotion. She has zero athletic ability and is in desperate need of a chin and a personality. For Smackdown, I'd toss Sable. If Vince wanted a middle-aged wench to do his personal bidding, he could have hired Missy Hyatt. The oodles of money she makes from her notorious Web site is proof that fans still want to see her.

Letter of the month (taken verbatim from the actual letter to share my torture with you all):

Dear Brandi I think WWE is getting stale and they should add one more brand on Friday nights two hours on TNN and Paul Heyman should be gm and make it an ECW like environment and put former ECW stars on it. That would make competition between brands a whole lot more exciting. The hardcore title could be brought back,and we would hopefully see RVD with a chair doing the Vandaminator and Vanterminator a lot more.I really miss the ECW feel.Do you think that a third brand with an ECW like feel would be a good idea?I would also like to know if you think Keiji Muto will ever come to WWE maybe even just for one match maybe at wrestleMania XX,and who's your favorite wrestler,and...do you think Triple H will lose the title to Goldberg at Summerslam and take an injury vacation to mary Stephanie?

MITCH SCOTT
wrestlegalaxy@hotmail.com

Mitch,

Just this once, I'm going to write big so you fully understand what I mean:

ECW IS DEAD! GET OVER IT! □

krew-cuts

By Frank Krewda

In with the old, out with the new. Ever since fans "wised up" to the business a bit, wrestlers, promoters, and even readers of this column have told me that the early-1980s style and standards just wouldn't hold up in the era of the smart fan.

Yet crowds from coast to coast and overseas continue to pop for wrestling maneuvers that are a little lacking in the credibility department. Regardless of who performs them, and in which circumstance they're executed, I believe these four holds/maneuvers wouldn't (or shouldn't) cut it in any era.

Booker T has been using the ax kick as one of his finishers since he was a mainstay in WCW. And Frank Krewda suggests it's high time he retired it.

FOUR MANEUVERS I'D LIKE TO SEE LESS OF ...

1. The slingshot catapult. Sure, to enjoy professional wrestling, one must take it for what it is. But under no conditions should fans be expected to buy into the notion that a physically spent wrestler has the presence of mind—and mastery of physics—to fulcrum his opponent from a supine position precisely into the ringpost with sufficient force to cause injury. Especially when the turnbuckle is padded with a few inches of foam rubber. The cartoonish nature of this transitional maneuver often tarnishes the quality of an otherwise-sound match because it simply looks silly compared to the jaw-dropping splendor of today's finest maneuvers.

2. The ax kick. No offense, Booker T, but I can't stand watching Christian bent over in the middle of the ring, waiting ... and waiting ... and waiting ... to get leveled. Doesn't anyone realize that there is a very simple, yet surefire counter for this: It's called falling flat on your face and rolling away! Booker T is obviously a very athletic man, as are most of his opponents, but nine times out of 10, the ax kick comes off looking sloppy, ineffective, and, quite frankly, silly.

3. The monkey flip. Didn't our parents do this to us when we were children? At what point in its evolution did the monkey flip become an instrument of torture? Like its distant cousin, the slingshot catapult, the monkey flip just looks like too much fun to be taken seriously as an offensive wrestling weapon. Of all the moves in his vast repertoire, Rob Van Dam insists on throwing this farcical maneuver into his matches. Why? Too many people have childhood memories of bouncing off their butts at home. Are we to believe the same activity actually renders a finely tuned performer like Chris Jericho helpless?

4. The Ace crusher. Call it the Stone-Cold stunner, RKO, Diamond cutter, or whatever. It may be exciting when timed right, but even casual observation reveals that the person executing the move could actually be worse for wear than the recipient. That is, of course, unless the recipient flops around the ring for 30 seconds afterward like a striped bass out of water. The devastation of this maneuver becomes even more suspect when not delivered flawlessly. And few wrestlers deliver the maneuver flawlessly.

* * *

On the other hand, these four maneuvers have been either drummed out of the sport or are hardly ever featured prominently, due in large part to their simplicity. They seem reasonably easy to perform, but they don't make the fans choke on their popcorn, so therefore they lack the requisite flash to rate in today's game. But in my opinion,

they often lend an air of authenticity (and logic) when executed properly.

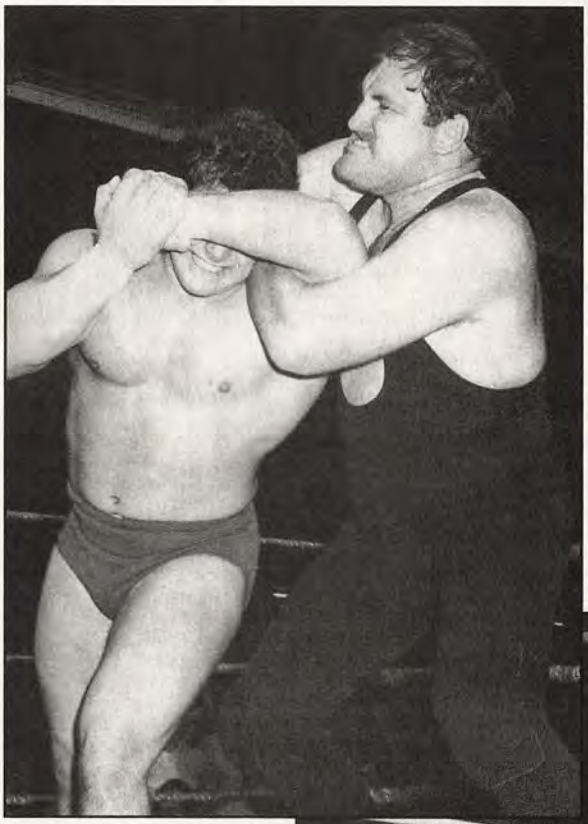
FOUR HOLDS/MANEUVERS I'D LIKE TO SEE MORE OF...

1. The bulldog. What better way to end a match than by grinding your opponent's head through the mat? Trish Stratus got the idea, and Goldust still brings it out occasionally. Of course, the bulldog looked much more ominous when "Cowboy" Bobby Duncum put his 300-plus pounds behind it. There's enough beef in WWE nowadays for somebody to revive it as an effective—and exciting—finisher. Imagine Brock Lesnar or Bill Goldberg riding his opponent's skull into the canvas ...

2. The cobra clutch. I suppose as long as WWE is still trotting Sgt. Slaughter out there for the occasional match or appearance, nobody else can lay claim to his famous finisher. But the fact is, the cobra clutch is one of the most notorious finishers in wrestling history. How about a match between Sarge and "Legend Killer" Randy Orton for ownership rights? It wouldn't be competitive, but at least we'd see an awesome finish. This hold was too devastating and too important to die a silent death.

3. The full-nelson. Think about it: If a strongman like Ken Patera broke necks with it, why wouldn't today's powerful wrestler give it a whirl? Probably because thrill-seeking fans can't sit still long enough to watch a wrestler slowly force his opponent's chin through his breastbone. So now it's just another hold that gets used every now and then at the beginning of a match. I, however, can't conceive of a more engrossing image or a more inclusive hold. The full-nelson requires one quality: strength (and no skill). And it's one of wrestling's truly (legally) inescapable holds to boot.

4. The eyepoke. Just the other night I watched Ric Flair stop Bill Goldberg in his tracks with two strategically placed eyepokes. Think the low blow is the great equalizer? Think again. Hey, professional wrestlers aren't trained to go for the eyes when they feel threatened for nothing. Aside from causing a foe some major pain and concern, a timely eyepoke goes a long way toward cementing one's reputation as a bad guy. Just look what it did for The Freebirds back in the 1980s. Let's face it: Counter to conventional wisdom, the eyes, not the grapefruits, are the real jewels. Anyone who would damage another person's eye simply to win a match must be rotten to the core, right? □



Given that WWE is trying to get its wrestlers to use more conservative moves/holds and not risk killing themselves while doing crazy stunts every night, why not bring back bring back Sgt. Slaughter's cobra clutch (above) and Ken Patera's killer finisher, the full-nelson (right)?

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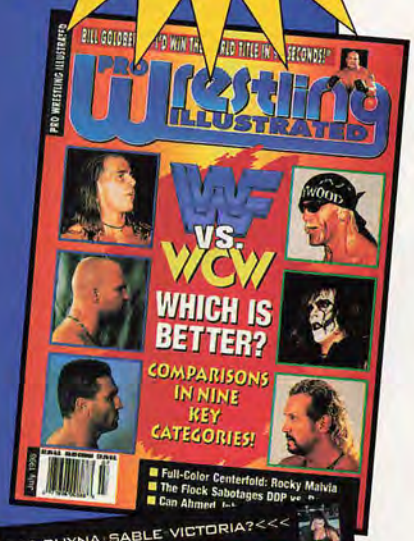

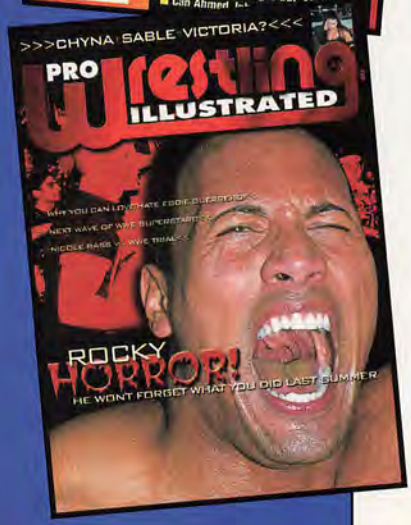

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May 1990: Hulk Hogan: Primed And Ready For WrestleMania VI. Centerfold: Great Muta. Plus: Piper-Rude, Eric Embry, Rock 'n' Rolls, Sid Vicious, pain.

July 1990: The Maturing Of Lex Luger: The "Total Package" Becomes The People's Choice. Centerfold: Rick Martel. Plus: Skyscrapers, Bobby Heenan, Mr. Saito, referees.

September 1990: The Hulkster's Wrath: 7,000 Miles To Violent Redemption. Centerfold: The Steiners. Plus: Jeff Jarrett, Sting, Destruction Crew, Four Horsemen, Curt Hennig.

October 1990: Sting's Painful Lesson: You'll Have No Friends At The Top. Centerfold: Brutus Beefcake. Plus: Orndorff-Blanchard, Tugboat, Teddy Long, Ultimate Warrior, Road Warriors.

April 1991: Sgt. Slaughter Guilty Of Treason! Centerfold: Tom Zenk. Plus: Sting, Magnum T.A., Jesse Ventura, Lawler-Gilbert, Hogan & Warrior.

June 1991: Hulk Hogan: America's Hero. Centerfold: Hacksaw Duggan. Plus: Cactus Jack, Ric Flair, Nasty Boys, Steiners, Simmons-Reed.

July 1991: The War Is Over! Hulk Hogan Liberates The WWF Belt From Sgt. Slaughter! Centerfold: Brian Pillman. Plus: Horsemen, Lex Luger, Eric Embry, Demolition.

August 1991 (Special Issue): Supercards '91. Centerfold: Hulk Hogan. Plus: WrestleMania VII, WCW-New Japan, Ultimate Warrior, Owen Hart, Koloff-Luger.

October 1991: Sid Justice: The Second Coming Of Hulk Hogan. Centerfold: Lex Luger. Plus: Hogan-Slaughter, Terrence Taylor, Barry Windham, Williams-Bigelow.

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February 1992: Has Hulk Hogan Had Enough? Centerfold: 1992 calendar. Plus: Sting, Justice-Roberts, hot prospects, Eddie Gilbert.

May 1992: Revitalized In Tokyo: Hulk Hogan Is Super-Psyched For WrestleMania VII! Centerfold: Rick Rude. Plus: Sting & Muta-Steiners, Jarrett & Fuller, Lightning Kid, Randy Savage, intimidation.

June 1992: Exclusive *PWI* Interview: Roddy Piper Speaks Out! Centerfold: Dustin Rhodes. Plus: Dangerously-Sting, Abdullah-Cactus, Sid Justice, Randy Savage.

July 1992: The Best Of The Best—The Masters Of Their Craft. Centerfold: Randy Savage. Plus: Liger-Pillman, Jim Neidhart, U.S.-Japan, Ric Flair.

September 1992: Savage vs. Sting: Why It Isn't That Unlikely. Centerfold: Nikita Koloff. Plus: Steiners, Barry Windham, Sid Justice, Hodge & Weston, Shawn Michaels.

October 1992: The Hatred Still Runs Deep: Ultimate Warrior vs. Randy Savage—They'll Settle Up At SummerSlam! Centerfold: Cactus Jack. Plus: Steve Williams, Tom Zenk, WWF title controversy, fire match, Eric Embry.

February 1993: No One Can Cut Down Razor Ramon. Centerfold: Curt Hennig. Plus: Jake Roberts, Pillman-Dustin, Ric Flair-Road Warriors, Rick Rude, Snuka-Muraco.

May 1993: WrestleMania Without Hulk Hogan? Centerfold: The Undertaker. Plus: Ron Simmons, Cactus Jack, Madusa-Sherri, WCW-New Japan, Ultimate Warrior.

April 1996: WCW World Title Turmoil. Centerfold: The Kid. Plus: Hulk Hogan, Ahmed Johnson, Bob Armstrong, Michaels-Bret, Public Enemy.

May 1996: Un-Natural! The WWF Has Finally Gone Too Far! Centerfold: Public Enemy. Plus: Jeff Jarrett, Dreamer-Raven, Dan Severn, Ric Flair, Giant.

October 1996: Peaking Too Soon: Will The Giant Be Ruined By His Own Success? Centerfold: Goldust. Plus: Big Van Vader, Ric Flair, Bulldog, Lex Luger.

February 1997: Mr. Perfect: "Shawn Michaels Stole My Life." Centerfold: "Psycho" Sid. Plus: Kroffat & Furnas, Vince McMahon, Randy Savage, New Razor & New Diesel.

July 1997: Steve Austin: Stone-Cold And Uncensored! Centerfold: "Diamond" Dallas Page. Plus: Rocky Maivia, The Road Warriors, The Eliminators, Nick Patrick.

December 1997: Ken Shamrock's Deadly Climb To The Top. Centerfold: Randy Savage. Plus: Eric Bischoff, Eddy Guerrero, Perry Saturn, WWF light heavyweights.

February 1998: Sting vs. Hogan—The Match Of The Century! Centerfold: Hogan vs. Sting fight poster. Plus: 16-page Starrcade preview, Perry Saturn, Dude Love.

May 1998: Starrcade Scandal! We Hate To Say It ... But Give The Belt Back To Hogan. Centerfold: Ric Flair. Plus: Mero & Sable, Taz, Taka Michinoku.

June 1998 (Special Issue): The 1998 PWI Poll. Centerfold: Steve Austin. Plus: Sabu, Lex Luger, Sting, Rocky Maivia, Bill Goldberg.

July 1998: WWF vs. WCW: Which Is Better? Centerfold: Rocky Maivia. Plus: Benoit, Bill Goldberg, Ahmed Johnson.

October 1998: Bret Screws Bret, Part II. Centerfold: Hunter Hearst Helmsley. Plus: Jim Ross, Marcus Bagwell, WWF controversy, FBI.

November 1998: Vince Mc(Mad)Man! He Crossed The Bottom Line ... Now He'll Pay! Centerfold: Kevin Nash. Plus: Sting, Bret Hart, Taz-Douglas, New Age Outlaws.

December 1998: Gold Rush! Get Ready For The Most Awesome WCW Title Reign Ever! Centerfold: Undertaker. Plus: The Giant, Vader, Guerreros, Ken Shamrock.

Holiday 1998: *PWI* 500. Eighth Annual Special.

March 1999: 1998—The Year In Wrestling. 1998 In Review, Achievement '98 awards, Unofficial/Official awards, Predictions for 1999.

April 1999: The Crock! The Title Change That Screwed The World! Centerfold: Chris Jericho. Plus: Bill Goldberg, Tommy Dreamer, Booker T, more Unofficial/Officials.

May 1999: Who Holds The Key To WrestleMania XV? Centerfold: Konnan. Plus: Mark Henry, Sting-Nash, Bill Alfonso, Brian Hildebrand.

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October 1999: Why The World Must Fear Scott Steiner, By Buff Bagwell. Centerfold: Mankind. Plus: Kane & X-Pac, The Godfather, Perry Saturn, 20th anniversary readers' poll.

November 1999: The Women Of The WWF: There's More To Their Power Than Their Looks. Centerfold: Owen Hart. Plus: Rey Misterio Jr., Roddy Piper, Steiners, Steve Austin.

December 1999: Steve Austin: "CEO This! I'm The Damn Champ!" Centerfold: Rey Misterio Jr. Plus: Randy Savage, Jimmy Hart, WCW youth, Billy Gunn.

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January 2000: The Millennium Man Mouths Off! An Unforgettable Hour With Chris Jericho! Centerfold: Taz. Plus: Chris Benoit, Sid-Goldberg, Triple-H.

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May 2000: The Y2K *PWI* Poll. Plus: Mitsuharu Misawa, Triple-H, Bret Hart, Hollys, Chyna & Aysa, ECW returnees.

June 2000: Just Wondering, Steph ... Is Triple-H Worth Your Billion-Dollar Inheritance? Centerfold: The Rock. Plus: Heyman-Van Dam, Vader, NWO.

July 2000: Call It A Wrap, Jack! You've Done Your Share ... Go Home! Centerfold: Sid Vicious. Plus: Dusty Rhodes, Disco Inferno, DDP, Dudleys-Hardys.

August 2000: Supercards 2000: WWF WrestleMania, WCW Uncensored, ECW Living Dangerously. Plus: Rob Van Dam, greatest supercards, Super 8.

September 2000: Wrestle McMania! Why The Peace Can't Last. Centerfold: Jeff Jarrett. Plus: Eric Bischoff, Dudleys, Raven.

October 2000: Scott Steiner: The Superstar The WWF Let Slip Away. Centerfold: Rikishi. Plus: Shawn Michaels, Austin-Rock, Rhino-RVD.

November 2000: The Rock vs. Triple-H. Our Special 50-Category Analysis. Pinups: Extreme wrestling. Plus: Nash-Steiner-Hall, Hardcore Holly, wrestling too extreme?

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January 2002: There's Something About Lita—What Makes Her The WWF's "It" Girl. Plus: Jericho-Stephanie, Mark Henry, X-Pac, Triple-H, Undertaker.

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March 2002: No More Joking, No More Choking: Y2J Takes A Serious Stab At Superstardom! Plus: Test, The Rock, Eric Bischoff, Bradshaw, Foley vs. Regal.

April 2002 (116 Pages): 2001—The Year In Wrestling. 2001 In Review, Achievement 2001 awards, Unofficial/Official awards, Predictions for 2002.

May 2002: The Mania To End All Manias! What Will Wrestling Look Like By WrestleMania X-9? Plus: Trish Stratus, RVD, Russ Haas, Big Bossman, WWF comedy.

June 2002 (116 Pages): The 2002 *PWI* Poll. Plus: Hulk Hogan, Ric Flair, Steve Austin.

July 2002: Steph Infection! How Can Triple-H Keep His Mind On His Game? Plus: Goldust-Terri, NWO, Ron Waterman, Spike & Tazz, Jazz.

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September 2002: No Rock ... No Problem: The WWF Can Thrive Without The Great One. Plus: WWF draft, Billy Kidman, Sean O'Haire, Stanley Weston.

October 2002 (116 Pages): Mid-Year Report. Top 50 stories, grades, half-year awards, predictions. Plus: Lou Thesz, Francine, Edge.

November 2002: Stone-Cold Meltdown! Plus: Heyman & Lesnar, Lance Storm, NWA: TNA, DDP, A.J. Styles, Island Boys.

December 2002 (116 Pages): *PWI* 500—RVD Is No. 1. Includes: The editors' views, Achievement 2002 ballot.

January 2003: Brock Aftershock: How Lesnar Changed The Future Of WWE. Plus: Chris Benoit, Low-Ki, Jericho-Flair, Rey Misterio Jr., SummerSlam at 15.

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March 2003: Rocky Horror! He Won't Forget What You Did Last Summer. Plus: Matt Hardy, Eddie Guerrero, Bass-WWE, Victoria, WWE's next wave.

April 2003 (116 Pages): 2002—The Year In Wrestling. 2002 In Review, Achievement 2002 awards, Unofficial/Official awards, Predictions for 2003.

May 2003 (116 Pages): The WrestleMania 100. Plus: Angle-Lesnar, Christopher Nowinski, Vince Russo, Batista & Flair.

June 2003 (116 Pages): The 2002 *PWI* Poll. Plus: Rey Misterio Jr.

August 2003 (116 Pages): Goldberg: He Has WWE Caught Between The Rock And A Hard Place! Plus: WrestleMania XIX, Shawn Michaels graduates, Paul London, Raven.

September 2003 (116 Pages): Guardian Angle: The One Superstar WWE Couldn't Afford To Lose. Plus: Hurricane, Sting, Kazarian-Sabin, Jeff Jarrett, Booker T, Brock Lesnar.

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press conference...

Billy Gunn hasn't shown signs that his rotator cuff is still bothering him since his return. You can believe Torrie would love to watch her new charge capture some Smackdown gold soon.

BILLY GUNN

THERE WAS A time when Billy Gunn had it all. He had the looks, the talent, and a resume of wins and titles that most wrestlers couldn't even dream of putting together. As one-half of The New Age Outlaws, he captured five World tag team championships. (Those five wins, combined with his three tag title wins as a member of The Smokin' Gunns, made him one of the most prolific tag team wrestlers in WWE history.) His association with DeGeneration X, the most popular clique in wrestling during the late-1990s, made him an even bigger star.

How odd it was then, when on October 30, 2000, a loss to Steven Richards (then the leader of Right To Censor) in a "Mr. Ass" match would begin such a miserable downward spiral. How odd it was that the loss of "Mr. Ass," his oft-maligned nickname, would initiate the most tumultuous period of his career.

Gunn tried to keep his career moving after that loss, but looking back, it's obvious that he tried too hard. After losing his "Mr. Ass" moniker, he began using other names, such as Billy G and The One, but none of them took. At that point, even some of his most staunch supporters weren't sure if he'd ever catch on with fans again.

To try to turn things around, Gunn became desperate. He settled on plain ol' Billy and formed a team with Chuck Palumbo, who dropped his last name as well. As a team, they found success (two WWE tag team titles) and controversy. Though Gunn and Palumbo aren't gay, they played a gay team on TV. They even got engaged. However, on their wedding day, they couldn't go through with the ceremony. They admitted it was all a publicity stunt and left WWE fans at the altar. Not long afterward, Gunn injured his shoulder and dropped off the map entirely.

*Just this summer, Gunn returned to the ring—once again in his hip-swiveling glory as "Mr. Ass." This time, however, he has his eyes on two things: a Smackdown championship and Torrie Wilson! **PWI** sent Editor-in-Chief Dave Lenker and Senior Writers Will Welsh and Harry Burkett to meet with Gunn to ask him who makes the better "The One," him or Keanu Reeves, what was going on in his head during his "engagement" to Chuck Palumbo, what he thinks of Chuck now, how his relationship with Torrie is going, and what he hopes to accomplish now that "Mr. Ass" is back.*

WILL WELSH: Billy, this past summer, *The Matrix Reloaded* made movie magic. It was the talk of Hollywood. Who do you think makes a better "The One"—you or Keanu Reeves?

BILLY GUNN: Oh, come on, man. What kind of question is that? I'm a wrestler; Reeves is an actor. It's not like I called myself that and also tried to portray myself as a wrestler from *The Matrix,* right?

WELSH: It's just a fun question for an icebreaker, that's all. Nothing to take too seriously. We just want to know who you think is the better "The One." Just try playing along.

"If you want to talk about how my reputation as a ladies man is doing, have you seen Torrie lately? She's the hottest, sexiest WWE diva ever, and she's walking to the ring with me every night."

GUNN: Well, considering that Reeves has done much better as his version and I used the name for all of a couple weeks, I guess you gotta give it to Neo. I do believe that I was a better-looking "The One," though—and I didn't even have the benefit of digital animation. Satisfied?

DAVE LENKER: We are. Now on to more serious subjects. Before your return this summer, the last time we saw you, you were breaking up with Chuck on national TV. Looking back, what do you think about that time in your career?

GUNN: Well, it certainly was different. There I was, a red-blooded American male—Chuck, too—and we went out there and made people believe we were gay. It wasn't easy at first, because we were forced to bypass all our usual comfort zones. Chuck and I, we had to develop a lot of trust between us, because neither of us had tried anything like that before. I guess if I had to sum up the experience, it was strange, but it was also successful. The crowds were way into it. We always got strong reactions.

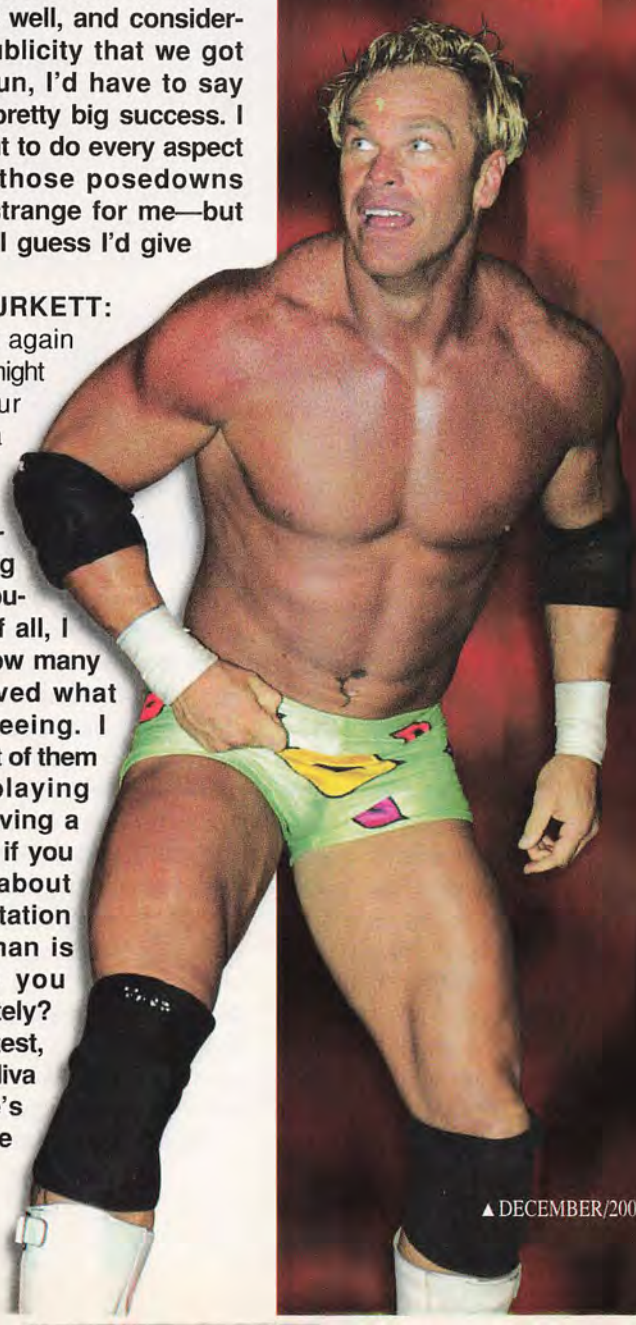
LENKER: If you had to do it again, would you?

GUNN: It was an interesting experience, and I showed my company that I'm willing to do what it takes to succeed. Sure, there were a few uncomfortable experiences, but I'm a professional. So is Chuck. We handled it well, and considering all the publicity that we got during that run, I'd have to say that it was a pretty big success. I might not want to do every aspect of it again—those posedowns were a little strange for me—but overall, yeah, I guess I'd give it another go.

HARRY BURKETT: So you'd do it again even though it might have hurt your reputation as a ladies man?

GUNN: That stunt didn't do anything to hurt my reputation. First of all, I don't know how many people believed what they were seeing. I think that most of them were just playing along and having a fun time. And if you want to talk about how my reputation as a ladies man is doing, have you seen Torrie lately? She's the hottest, sexiest WWE diva ever, and she's walking to the

Every issue, reporters from PRO WRESTLING ILLUSTRATED will participate in an incisive press conference with a top wrestling star. The questions will be demanding. And the answers will reveal the innermost thoughts of the giants of the sport.



Sorry all you FBI fans, but it's no contest. "Mr. Ass" looks a lot better on the arm of Miss Wilson (left) than he did proposing to Chuck Palumbo (above). He feels more comfortable, too.

ring with me every night.

WELSH: That may be true, but who's to say that you're not trying to pull a Demi Moore on us?

GUNN: What does that mean?

WELSH: It means that you've been on the road a lot and you haven't watched *Entertainment Tonight* lately is what it means. Demi's been hanging out with that young guy from *That '70s Show,* Ashton Kutcher. Word around Hollywood is that she's dating him just to get back in the spotlight—and it's working. We're thinking maybe that's what you're doing with Torrie.

GUNN: You reporters ... you're always looking for ways to avoid the obvious. You're always trying to invent something that's racier than the truth. Torrie and I are with each other because we like each other, we like spending time in each other's company, and we complement each other well. We're both fun-loving people.

LENKER: I think the reason that Will is questioning the relationship is because, well, Chuck has made some questionable career moves since you two split up. He's done some things to repair his reputation that might or might not benefit his career, and we were just wondering if you were following in his footsteps.

GUNN: Like what?

LENKER: Well, he gave himself a complete makeover. He's now with The Full-Blooded Italians, which means that he doesn't shave, wears leather, and acts like he's a New York City thug. Before Billy and Chuck got together, I'm not so sure that he'd go to such drastic measures to prove that he's so manly. I mean, when he made his debut in WCW, he didn't look anything like he does today. Back then, he looked a little like Tarzan.

GUNN: Hey, Chuck's an okay guy, but after that whole wedding thing ended, we were both confused about what to do next. I mean, we had been pegged as these two guys for so long that it was only natural for us to want to go out and re-establish our identities. I don't really see what's wrong with that. He's doing what he has to do to get his career on track.

WELSH: And you're not hanging with Torrie just to get your career back on track?

GUNN: You know, if Torrie wasn't a knockout, if she wasn't a 15 on a scale of one to 10, then maybe I'd see your point. If she was just any old girl I was cavorting around with on TV, then maybe I'd get where you're coming from. But I'm with her because I

like her! Look at her! She's beautiful and sweet! Why is that so hard for you to understand?

WELSH: Because we're still trying to figure out that Ashton Kutcher-Demi Moore thing.

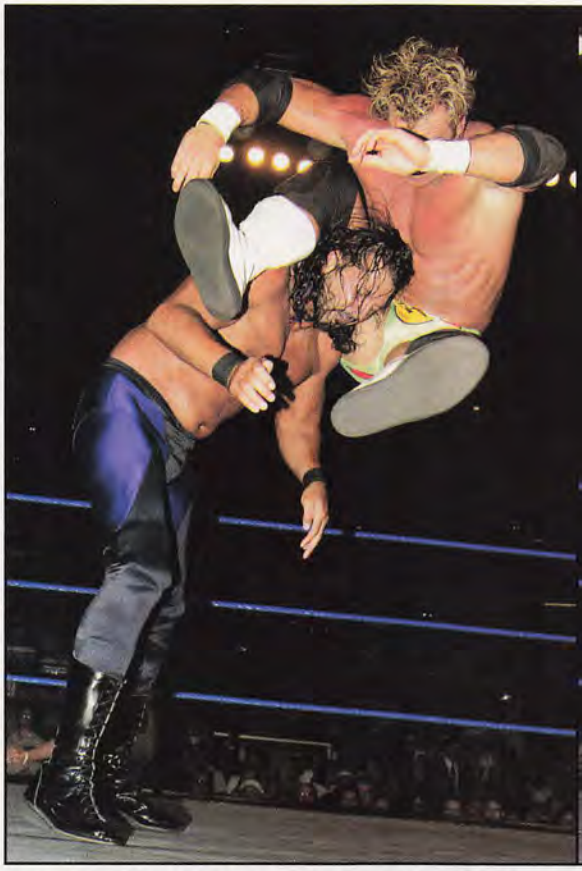
GUNN: Well, get past it, because your obsession with those two is making you look like jackasses.

LENKER: Point taken. You spent somewhere around eight months on the disabled list, and in that time, a lot of things changed concerning the Smackdown brand. A lot of new wrestlers have been given shots to make an impact, and other veterans have changed their style to find continued success. What's your take on Smackdown's roster now, and where do you think you fit in?

GUNN: That's a good question, because I really had to sit down and figure that out for myself. Right now, it just seems like the brand is so laden with top talent, almost too laden. Just look at some of the names who were involved in the U.S. title tournament, like myself. You also had Chris Benoit, Eddie Guerrero, Rhyno—these are guys that are going for U.S. gold who instead should be contenders for the [Smackdown] title. There's just so much talent on the Smackdown roster that it's ridiculous. But I like it that way.

BURKETT: Billy, you mentioned the U.S. title tournament. Eddie Guerrero beat you to advance to the finals by hitting you with a chair and then faking out the referee. What did you think about that when you watched the match afterward?

GUNN: I wanted to find him and beat some respect into him, that's what I thought. He screwed me royally, because I know that I could've beaten him if he had wrestled that match on the up and up. He needed that chair shot to get by me. It's too damn bad our referees are so blind sometimes.



Kanyon was but one man to fall prey to Gunn's famouser (above left) as he advanced to the semifinals of the U.S. title tourney. Billy G had him flying all over the ring in a recent bout (above right). U.S. gold is his immediate goal, but he's aiming higher than that in the long run.

BURKETT: What did you think about the fans chanting for Guerrero instead of you?

GUNN: You can't always take what fans think personally, because they'll cheer for you one week and boo you the next. They're way too fickle. I just have to continue doing what I do best, which is win matches.

LENKER: You're one of the most successful tag team wrestlers of all-time, and you've sometimes had a rough time of it as a singles competitor. Have you given any thoughts to tagging again? And if so, have you thought about a partner?

GUNN: Right now, Dave, I'm concentrating on my career as a singles wrestler. Tag teaming ... I've done that, I've proven myself in that area. I can stand here today and say that I am the best tag team wrestler alive and maybe the best tag team wrestler ever, and I can believe that because my record will prove it out.

LENKER: So no more tag matches?

GUNN: Never say never, but for the time being I'd say no. I might wrestle a tag team match every now and then, but for the first time in my career I'm concentrating on doing for myself and myself alone. I have a lot riding on this comeback, and I'm not going to let myself or the people who believe in me down.

BURKETT: One more question: How does Smackdown champion Billy Gunn sound?

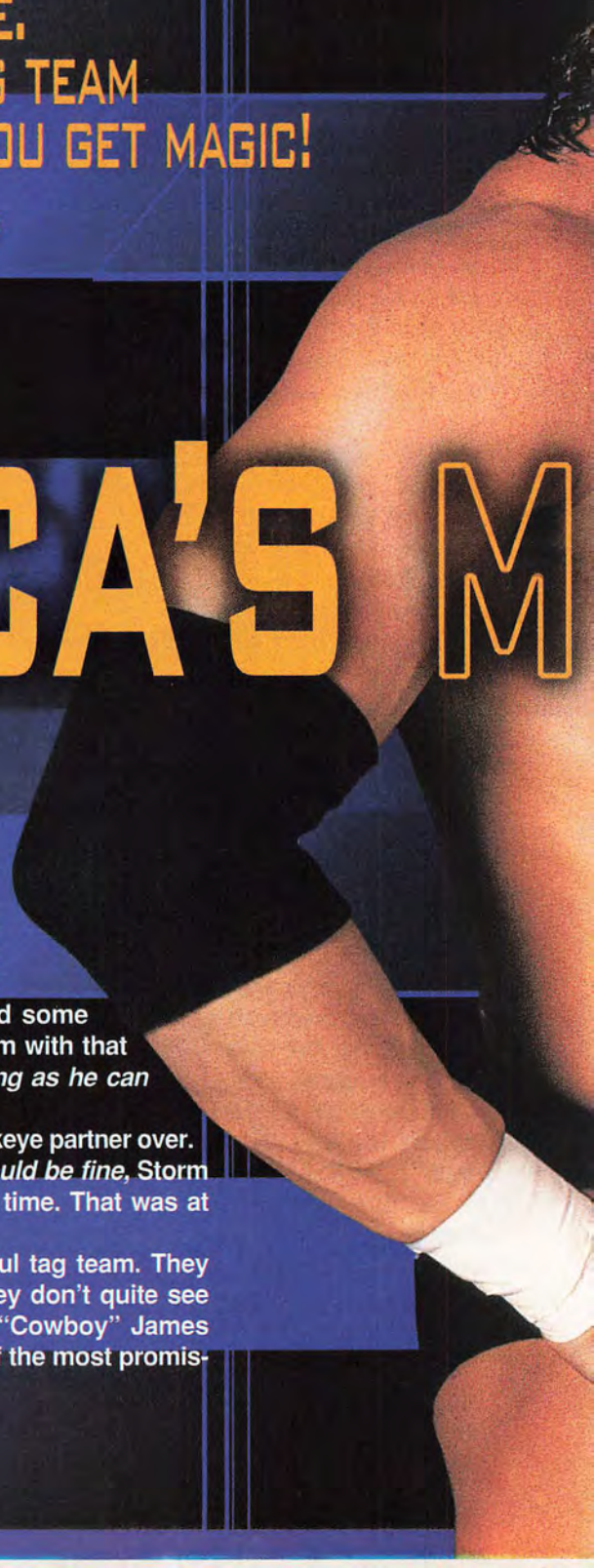
GUNN: Like a possibility, Harry. Like a real strong possibility. □

ON THEIR OWN, NWA-TNA'S

CHRIS HARRIS AND JAMES STORM

ARE GOOD WRESTLERS,
BUT HARDLY DISTINCTIVE.
PUT THEM IN THE RING AS A TAG TEAM
AND YOU GET MAGIC!
INDEED, THEY ARE ...

AMERICA'S M



By Dan Murphy

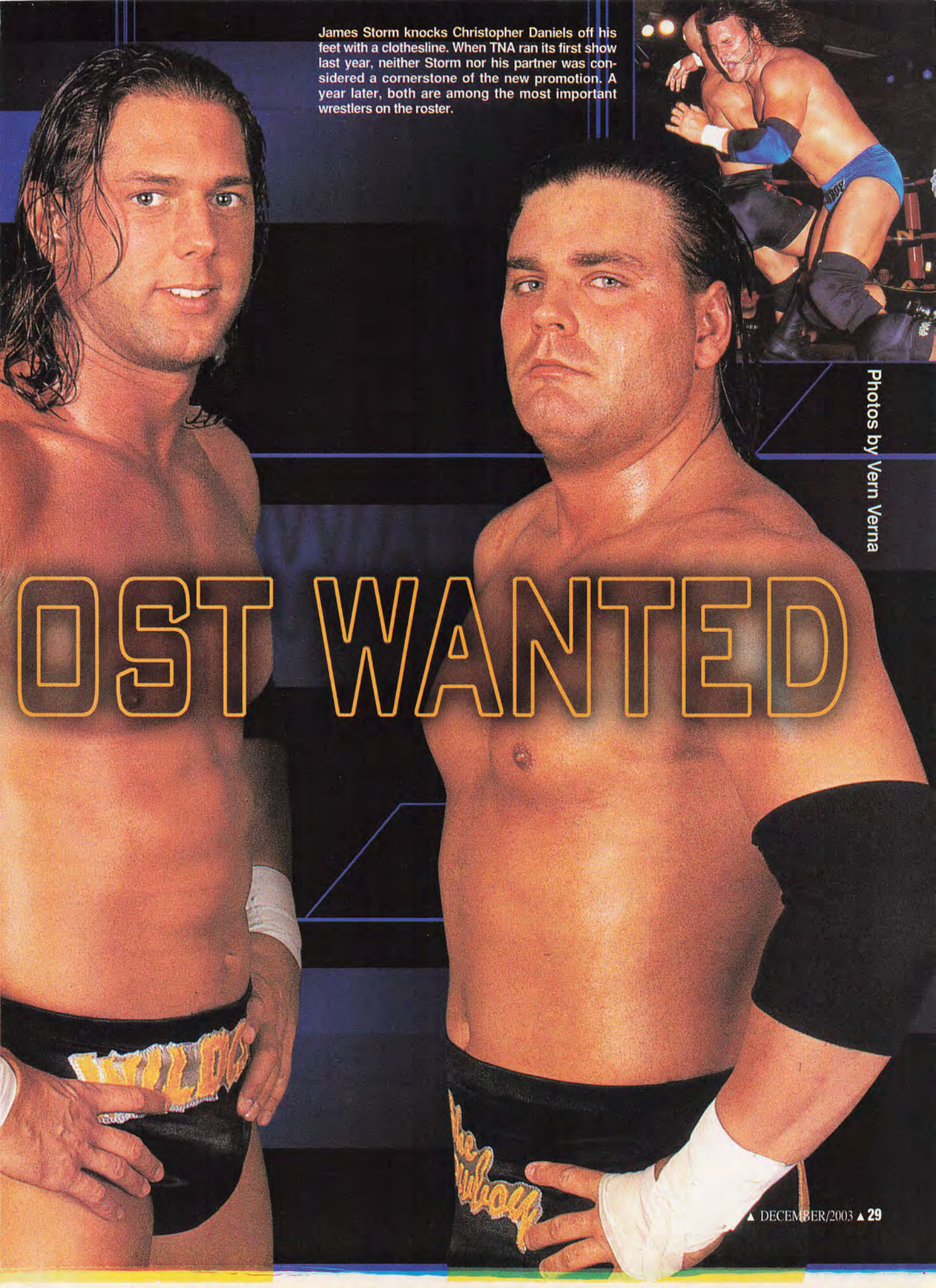
WHEN CHRIS HARRIS met James Storm, he wasn't quite sure how to react.

A native of suburban Cincinnati, Harris didn't get to know too many cowboys growing up. With his goofy 10-gallon hat perched on top his head and Midwestern drawl, Storm looked pretty ridiculous to Harris. But he'd heard some good things about the rugged cowboy he was scheduled to team with that night. *Different strokes for different folks,* Harris thought. *As long as he can handle himself in the ring, he can dress any way he likes.*

"Nice hat, partner," Harris offered weakly. Storm looked his Buckeye partner over.

As long as he doesn't do anything too stupid in there, we should be fine, Storm thought. And America's Most Wanted shook hands for the first time. That was at the beginning of last summer.

It's not the kind of origin you might expect from a successful tag team. They don't particularly get along outside the ring (and sometimes they don't quite see eye-to-eye in the ring, either). But "Wildcat" Chris Harris and "Cowboy" James Storm have evolved into the top tandem in NWA-TNA, and one of the most promising young teams in wrestling.

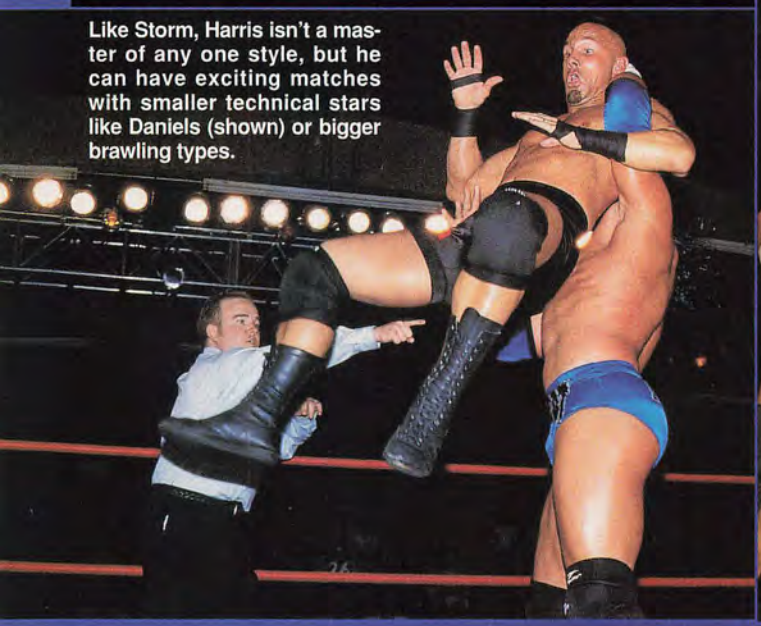


James Storm knocks Christopher Daniels off his feet with a clothesline. When TNA ran its first show last year, neither Storm nor his partner was considered a cornerstone of the new promotion. A year later, both are among the most important wrestlers on the roster.

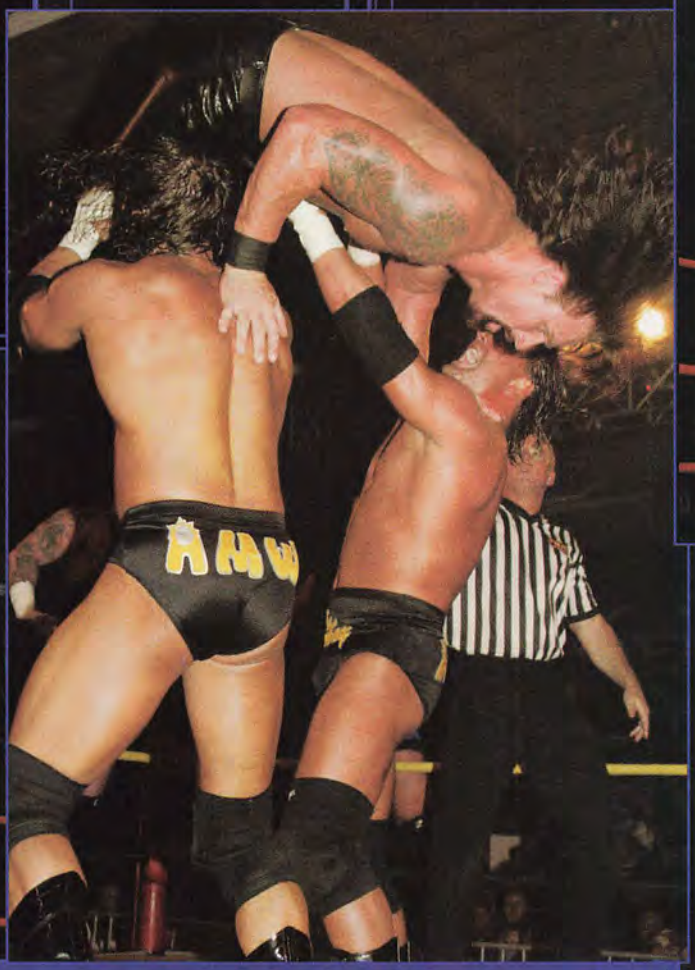
Photos by Vern Verna

OST WANTED

"When this promotion started up last summer ... Harris and Storm were two young kids who wanted to break through the crowd and make it to the top, so they formed a partnership. I know they wrestled each other a few times before that, but as it turned out, they clicked as a team, and we caught ourselves some lightning in a bottle." —TNA broadcaster Don West



Like Storm, Harris isn't a master of any one style, but he can have exciting matches with smaller technical stars like Daniels (shown) or bigger brawling types.



TNA officials finally seemed to have figured out that America's Most Wanted is not a team that needs to be broken up for the purposes of signing heated grudge matches between former partners. Both could easily flop as singles, and their magic would be gone.

America's Most Wanted is a textbook example of a team being greater than the sum of its parts. Taken individually, Harris and Storm are relatively unassuming competitors. They both hover right around the 230-pound mark. Neither is what you would call a powerhouse, though both could hold their own in a barroom brawl. Neither is what you might call a technical master, though both know their share of takedowns and countermoves. Neither is what you might call a high-flyer, though both know their way around the ropes.

But together, America's Most Wanted has jelled in a way few teams do. They have become the elite—and by far most popular—team in NWA-TNA, and have excelled against larger and more experienced tandems, including Slash and Brian Lee and the Harris Boys. Storm and Harris currently are at odds with the team of Glenn Gilberti, Simon Diamond, and Johnny Swinger, and the smart money would be with them coming out of that feud still holding the NWA tag belts.

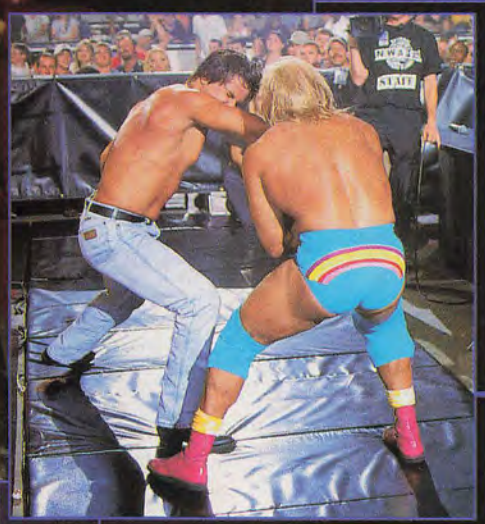
How have two "average" wrestlers become arguably wrestling's premier tag team?

"I'm sure Mike Tenay could give you some kind of fancy technical explanation about how their styles complement one another or some such analytical answer, but I think the fact of the matter is that Chris and James are both hungry," said NWA-TNA color commentator Don West. "When this promotion started up last summer, everyone was on an even playing field. You never knew who would show up on any given Wednesday night or who would jump out and become the surprise stars. Harris and Storm were two young kids who wanted to break through the crowd and make it to the top, so they formed a partnership. I know they wrestled each other a few times before that, but as it turned out, they clicked as a team, and we caught ourselves some lightning in a bottle."

America's Most Wanted also has "freshness" going for them. Unlike other teams, fans didn't consider them a tired act that they'd already seen in go-nowhere mid-card roles in other promotions. Much like current NWA champion A.J. Styles, Storm and Harris were perceived as being homegrown talents, as opposed to big names who somehow stumbled elsewhere. That freshness and youthful exuberance earned America's Most Wanted a chance.

But winning respect didn't come easy. When Storm entered TNA, a lot of people saw only his unoriginal gimmick. But Storm's determination, talent,

Storm may have brought a pretty silly, predictable, and overdone cowboy gimmick with him to TNA, but there's nothing silly or predictable about what he does in the ring week after week (right and above). And TNA fans have taken notice.



Remember The Rainbow Express, Lenny and Bruce? They were being groomed as one of the top teams in the company when TNA ran its first show in June 2002. Harris and his partner were just thrown together as little more than filler. But Lenny and Bruce are long gone. And who knew AMW had such star potential?

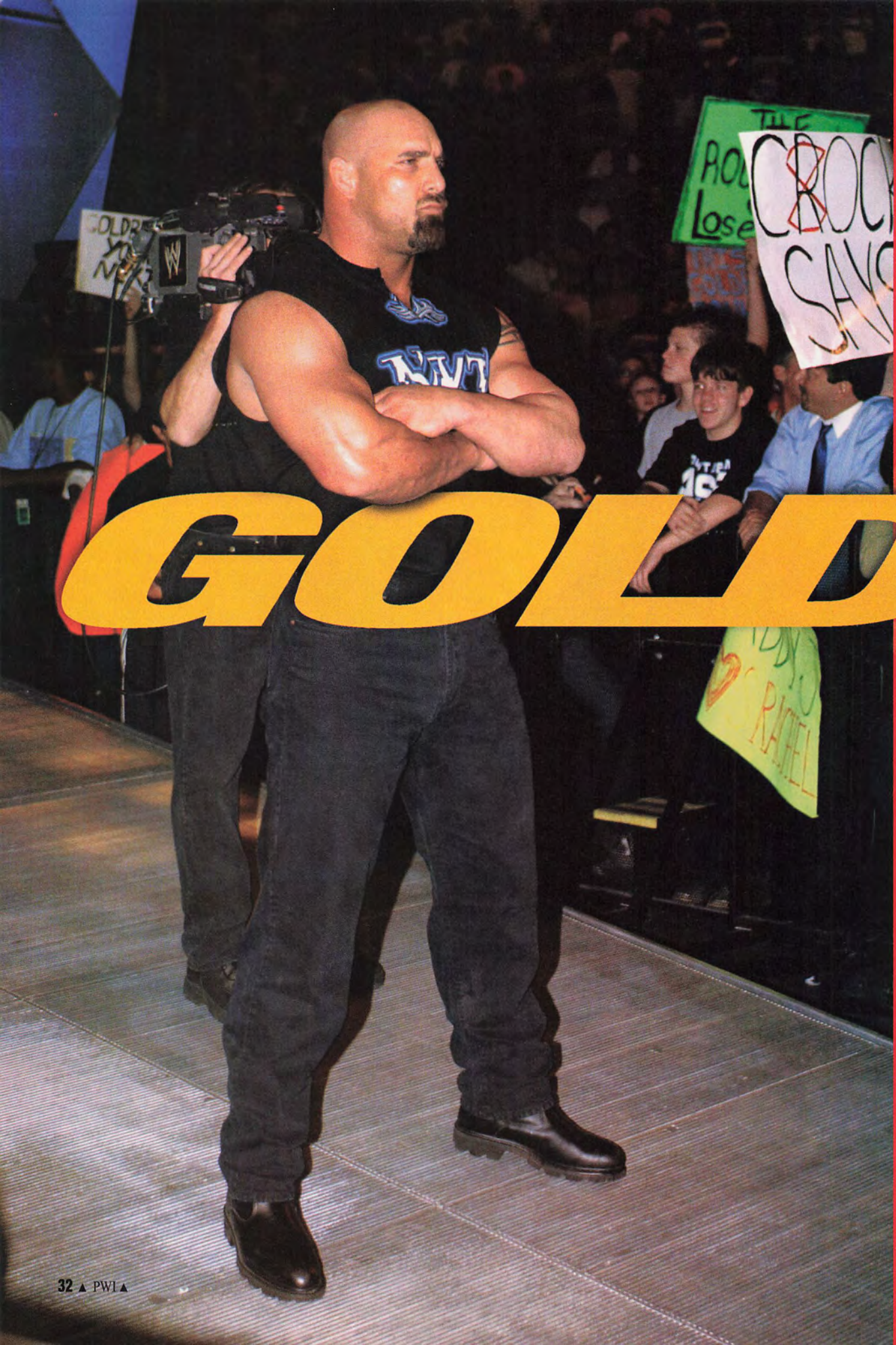
and perseverance made the TNA faithful see him as a talented wrestler and not just another stiff with a cowboy gimmick.

"I think the defining moment for America's Most Wanted—as far as I'm concerned—came during their feud with The Disciples of the New Church," said TNA fan Jess Absmeir, who claims he has attended more than 20 TNA shows. "They gave up a lot of power to Brian Lee, and Slash and James Mitchell are capable of just about anything. The fact that they took everything those goons could throw at them and came back for more showed me that these guys have something special."

Another thing Storm and Harris have going for them is deceptive experience. While they're both young, both have been in wrestling for roughly six years. That's why so many teams get caught off-guard when Harris applies a textbook sharpshooter or Storm counters a punch or kick with lightning speed. On top of that, both are well-rounded competitors and know each other's limitations.

"It all comes down to communication, baby," said former WWF manager Capt. Lou Albano, a man who guided 13 teams to 17 World tag titles. "What I like most about these kids is they're not out there trying to showcase every move they've ever learned in each and every match. They know what they have to do as individuals, and they expect their partner to do what they need to do. If you can strike that kind of a balance, you don't have to be best friends away from the ring. In fact, some of the best guys I managed were almost always at each other's throats. As long as they watch each other's backs in the ring, things work out just fine."

That's certainly the case with Harris and Storm, who have had several nasty spats in the past. But once the bell rings, America's Most Wanted has been able to put their differences aside and come out with both guns blazing. After all, that's what true partners do. □


GOLD
CROCK
SAYS
RACHEL

By Harry Burkett

The Rock not only got the best of Goldberg in most of their physical confrontations before Backlash—he outwitted him and made him look like a bumbling fool. Fans even started supporting Rock again by the time that match finally happened! It was hard to support "Da Man" then.

BERG

Is he getting a BUM RAP?

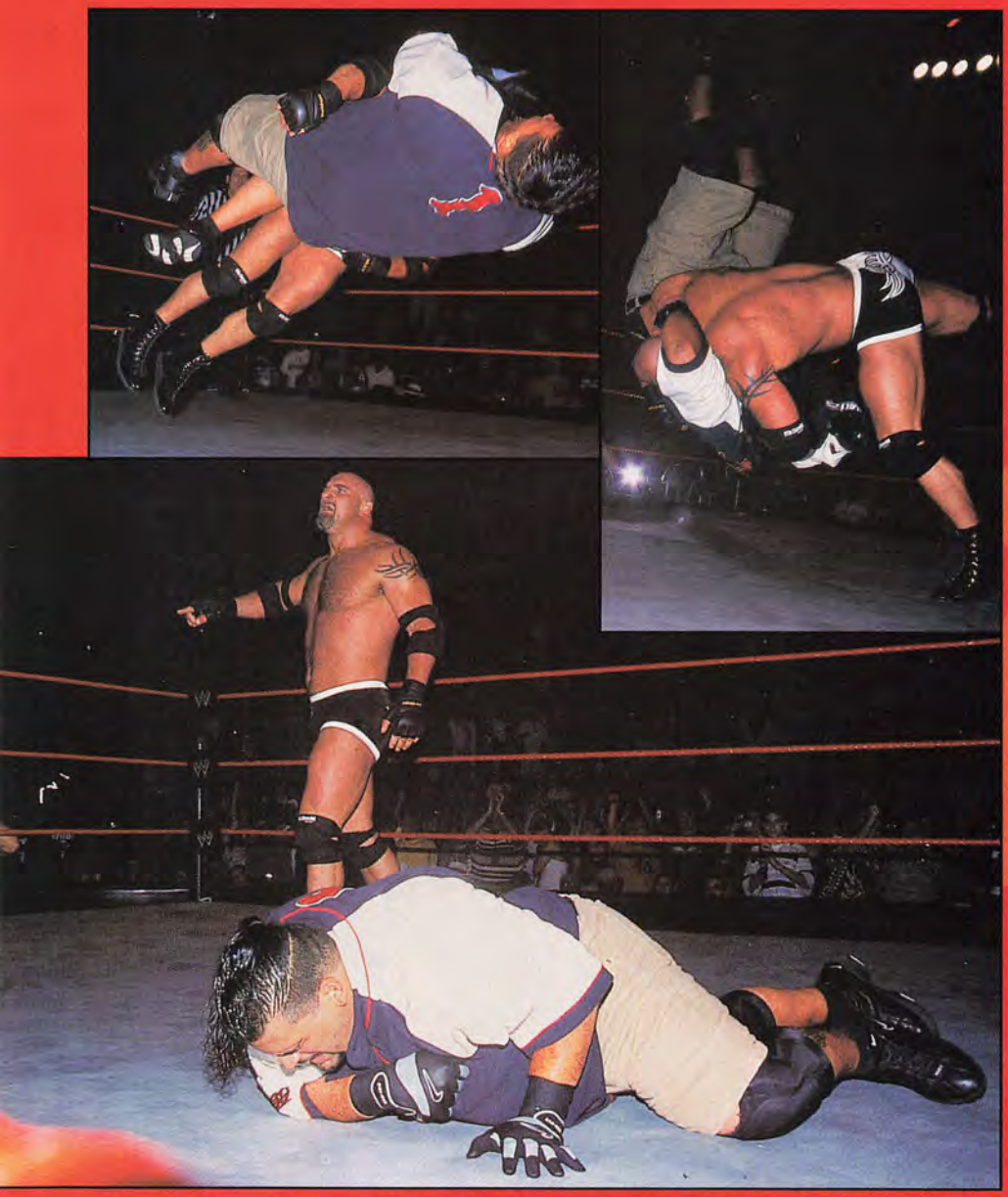
DURING A RECENT conference call with investors, WWE CEO Linda McMahon—as she has become accustomed to doing over the past couple of years—was trying to explain why the company's revenues had not returned to pre-2001 levels. She usually cites injured superstars, the need to be patient with the brand extension, the economy, stale storylines, and the competition from reality programming as the reasons why people are not supporting or spending money on WWE as they have in the past. She has never blamed any one individual for the company's woes ... until now. In that conference call, McMahon said that Goldberg's run had been "disappointing, compared to what we expected him to be."

That's strong language when talking to investors. Assuming that Linda is as shrewd as the rest of her family, and some would say she's the shrewdest, her singling out of Goldberg had to be carefully considered and intentional. The comment infuriated Goldberg, who reportedly expressed his displeasure to other wrestlers backstage at the Bad Blood pay-per-view.

Was it fair for Linda McMahon to pinpoint Goldberg as a specific reason why WWE is not doing as well as expected? Probably not. Is she correct that Goldberg's run has been disappointing? Absolutely. But is WWE or Goldberg to blame? That's up for debate.

"After Vince McMahon finally persuaded Goldberg to sign a contract, he should have realized there were obstacles to overcome," noted *PWI's* WWE analyst, Thomas Pilliard. "It's well-known that Goldberg has resisted returning to wrestling, and has probably done so mostly for the money, and many fans hold that against him. WWE should have

Christian even made Goldberg look bad this spring and hardly got squashed once they squared off inside a steel cage. Goldberg didn't become a huge star in WCW by struggling against mid-carders.



Spear ... jackhammer ... victory! That's the way to handle Goldberg's push, especially when he's in there with undercard wrestlers such as Rosey. Let us all hope that everyone with power in WWE realizes the mistakes that were made with Goldberg during his first few months with the company.

been ready for Goldberg to get a reaction similar to what The Rock began receiving a year ago. Fans sensed that The Rock believed he was bigger than the business, and it looks to me like they sense the same with Goldberg. They should have taken steps to either help him regain his 'everyman' image, made him seem like something ultra-special from the start, or turned him heel and pitted him against the Raw co-GM, Steve Austin."

Instead, WWE fans received a watered-down version of Goldberg. It was a kinder, gentler Goldberg who was willing to wear Goldust's wig and smile about it. It was a Goldberg who was frequently on the receiving end of brutal beatings and routinely outsmarted by his rivals. It was a Goldberg who was given, basically, a mid-card slot on the Raw roster. Jim Ross, the vice president of talent relations, admitted that WWE mishandled Goldberg's entry into the company during a recent interview on TSN's *Off The Record*. He is the only official who has taken any responsibility.

Obviously, WWE learned nothing from the Scott Steiner debacle. Steiner was popular in WCW because there was a sense that he would say absolutely anything, and his presence gave *Nitro* an air of unpredictability. The Raw creative team strangled every bit of spontaneity out of "Big Poppa Pump" during his initial segments. They didn't play to Steiner's strengths and, thus far, haven't played to Goldberg's. Just as WWE had revealed the weaknesses of the physically limited Steiner by placing him in matches that went far too long, Goldberg had to talk and was placed in campy backstage vignettes, which, even in WCW, never did him any favors.

"WWE fans received a watered-down version of Goldberg. It was a kinder, gentler Goldberg who was willing to wear Goldust's wig and smile about it. It was a Goldberg who was frequently on the receiving end of brutal beatings and routinely outsmarted by his rivals. It was a Goldberg who was given, basically, a mid-card slot on the Raw roster."

WWE must come to a cold realization: Not everyone fits in the mold of Steve Austin, The Rock, and Kurt Angle. Those three are probably the most versatile performers ever, and WWE was lucky to have them at the same time. Not everyone has the ability to interact flawlessly in backstage skits, get the crowd in an uproar, and then wrestle a 25-minute match.

Many others share the view that WWE,

not Goldberg, has proven to be inflexible. And, in a very "WCW-esque" move, WWE rushed him into a feud with Chris Jericho to capitalize on real-life friction between the two, stemming from Goldberg's refusal to wrestle Jericho in WCW due to his lack of size. Only one week after his March 31 debut on *Raw,* Goldberg was allegedly overheard making those same kinds of statements about Jericho again, prompting Y2J to confront him. Jericho ended up placing "Da Man" in a front facelock before wrestlers and agents could separate them. Goldberg, being the newcomer, got a lot of the blame. Both have since downplayed the incident.

But was Goldberg correct? Is it believable that Jericho, at 5'10" and 225 pounds, is an even match for Goldberg, who stands 6'3" and weighs 283 pounds? Those who saw Jericho put that front facelock on Goldberg might think so, but it might not be credible within the context of a high-impact WWE-style match.

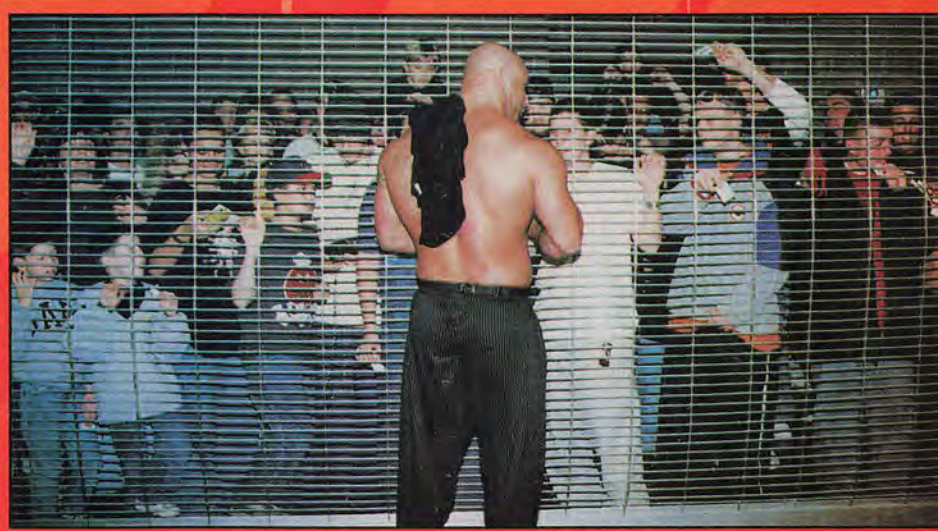
"I like to use analogies to explain things in as simple a context as possible," said Editor-in-Chief Dave Lenker. "With Goldberg, WWE tried to take Coca-Cola Classic and turn it into New Coke, a hipper, sweeter version of an already successful formula. In other words, they tampered with something that wasn't in need of change, made it more complicated. They robbed Goldberg of his greatest attribute: his intimidation factor. He's one guy who doesn't need to be well-rounded and versatile.

"Not only did Goldberg wear Goldust's wig, but he also fell victim to every one of The Rock's dumb stunts before Backlash, and also fell victim to Jericho's mind games before Bad Blood. The Rock and Jericho made him out to be a joke in their promos. 'Ol' whisker biscuit'? Goldberg won both of those matches, but, otherwise, it seemed that the entire WWE was trying to get over at his expense. I almost wonder if the McMahons have a secret loathing for Goldberg because he reminds them of WCW, because he was created by WCW. How can you expect people to get behind someone like that?"

The latest flap regarding Goldberg involved the Insurrextion pay-per-view, held June 7 in the United Kingdom. Backstage scuttlebutt says Goldberg was asked to appear at the pay-per-view at the last minute, but he balked at the idea because he was already committed to his allotted six appearances for that month. Eventually, Goldberg reconsidered and agreed to the PPV, but, according to sources, WWE management told him not to bother. That might have been the first sign that WWE was planning to de-emphasize Goldberg.

After Bad Blood, Goldberg was rarely allowed anywhere near *Raw* main events, and he was relegated to answering Rodney Mack's "White Boy Challenge" on one show (though at least he scored the kind of simple, lopsided victory that became his trademark in WCW in that). Goldberg, who was supposed to be on track to face Raw champion Triple-H at SummerSlam 2003, seemed lucky if he would actually make the undercard of that event. Goldberg's notorious stubbornness and temper—he can't seem to handle getting booed—is partly to blame for his current situation, but much of it is due to the creative team's failure to capitalize on a proven draw. Even WCW didn't damage Goldberg's image this badly.

"Because WWE so tightly controls its performers, it's ridiculous that the McMahons would blame this solely on Goldberg," said Pilliard. "He was a relatively clean slate with instant name recognition, and they managed to drop the ball on that. They could have turned Goldberg's weaknesses into strengths, but I get the sense they didn't really try."

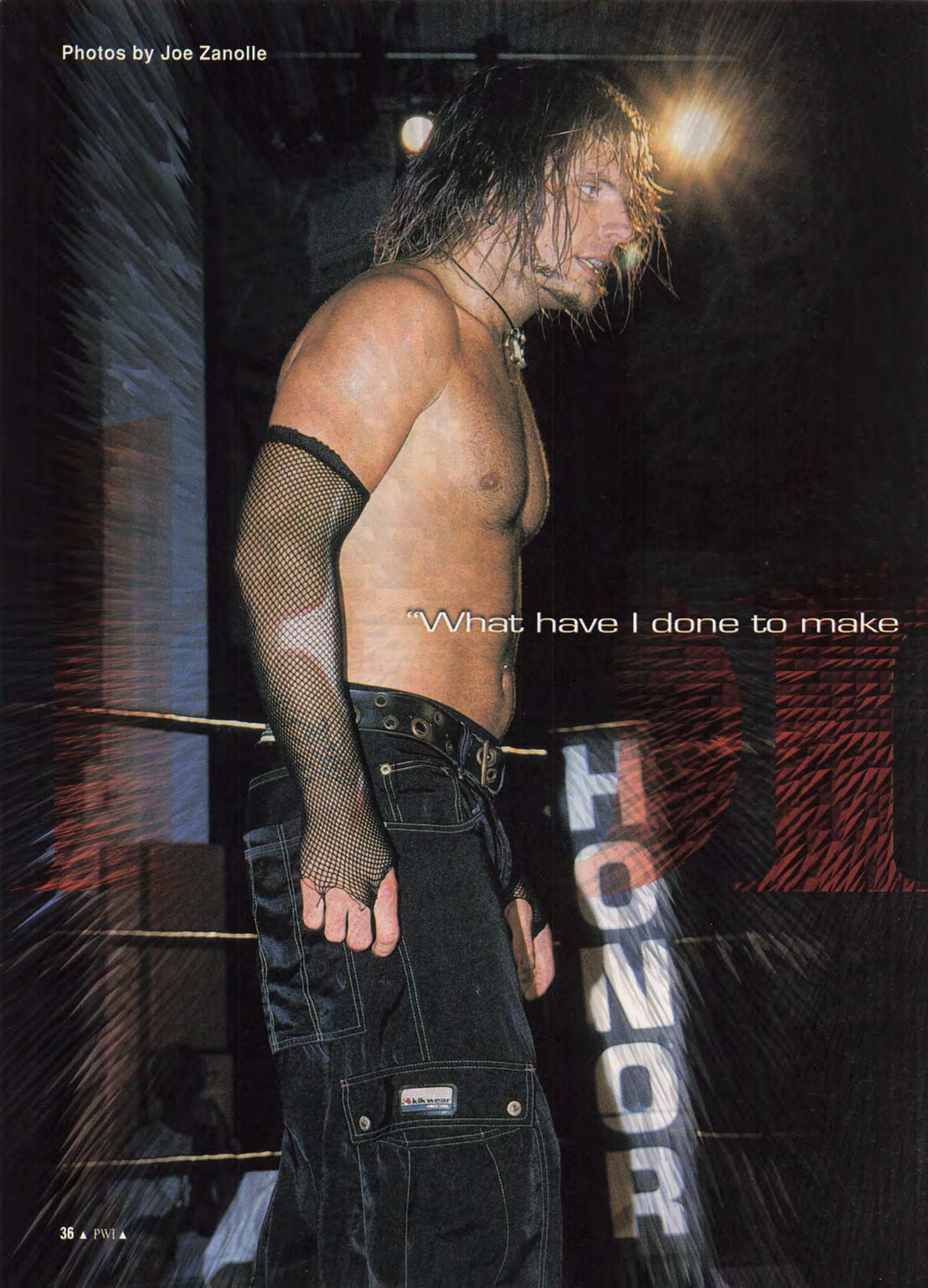


Less than five years ago, you literally needed a steel gate to keep the people from mobbing their number-one hero. There is still time to rebuild this former WCW World champion's image, fortunately.

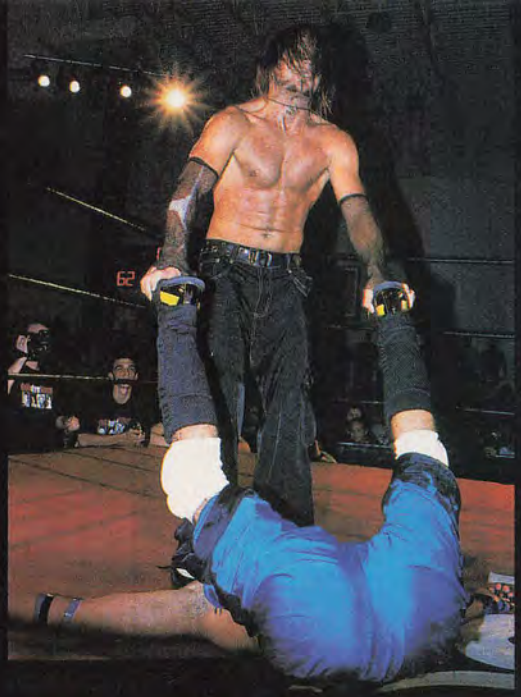
Even now, Goldberg's critics are saying he's too injury-prone for WWE, citing an arm infection that took him off television for the first couple of weeks in July. Goldberg finally had a nose-to-nose confrontation with Raw champion Triple-H during the July 21 edition of *Raw,* indicating WWE could be getting his career back on the right track. Either that, or the McMahons are in a hurry to recoup at least some of the money they've paid him with a marquee main event at SummerSlam before they send him back to Oklahoma.

Then again, it isn't too late for WWE to turn around the Goldberg experiment. So far, though, WWE's handling of Goldberg has been "disappointing." □

Photos by Joe Zanolle

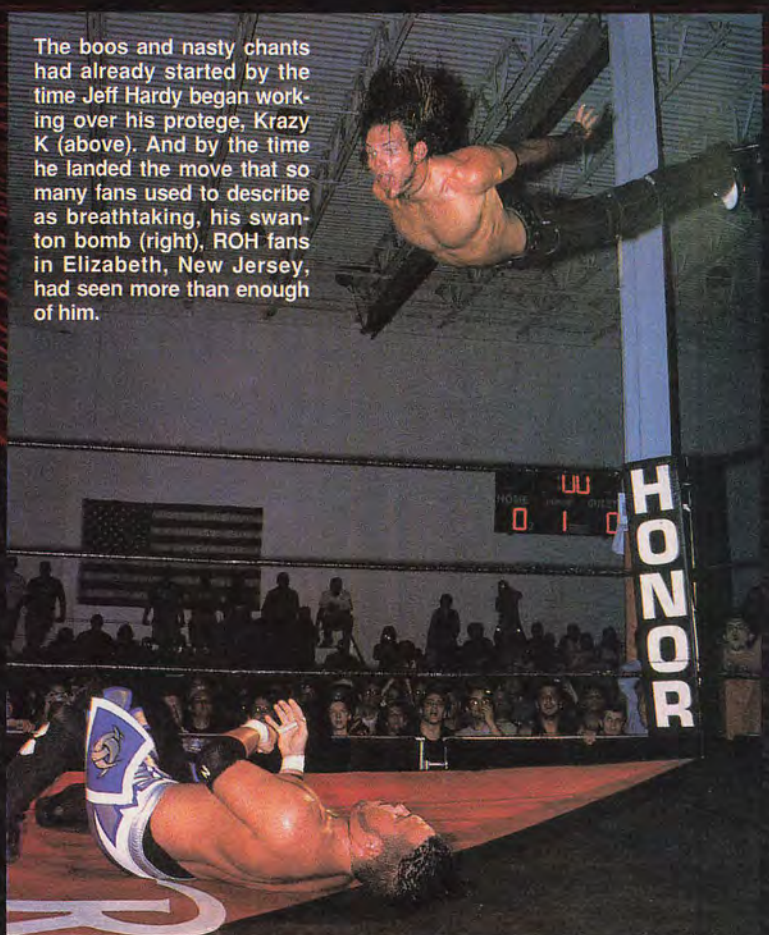


"Every time Hardy hit an offensive move, the fans booed mercilessly. When Hardy scored the pin following his signature swanton bomb in what wasn't exactly a scintillating match, the fans reacted with fury. The message they were sending was clear: Jeff Hardy is not welcome in Ring of Honor. At least not now."



jeff hardy's ring of horror

the fans hate me?"



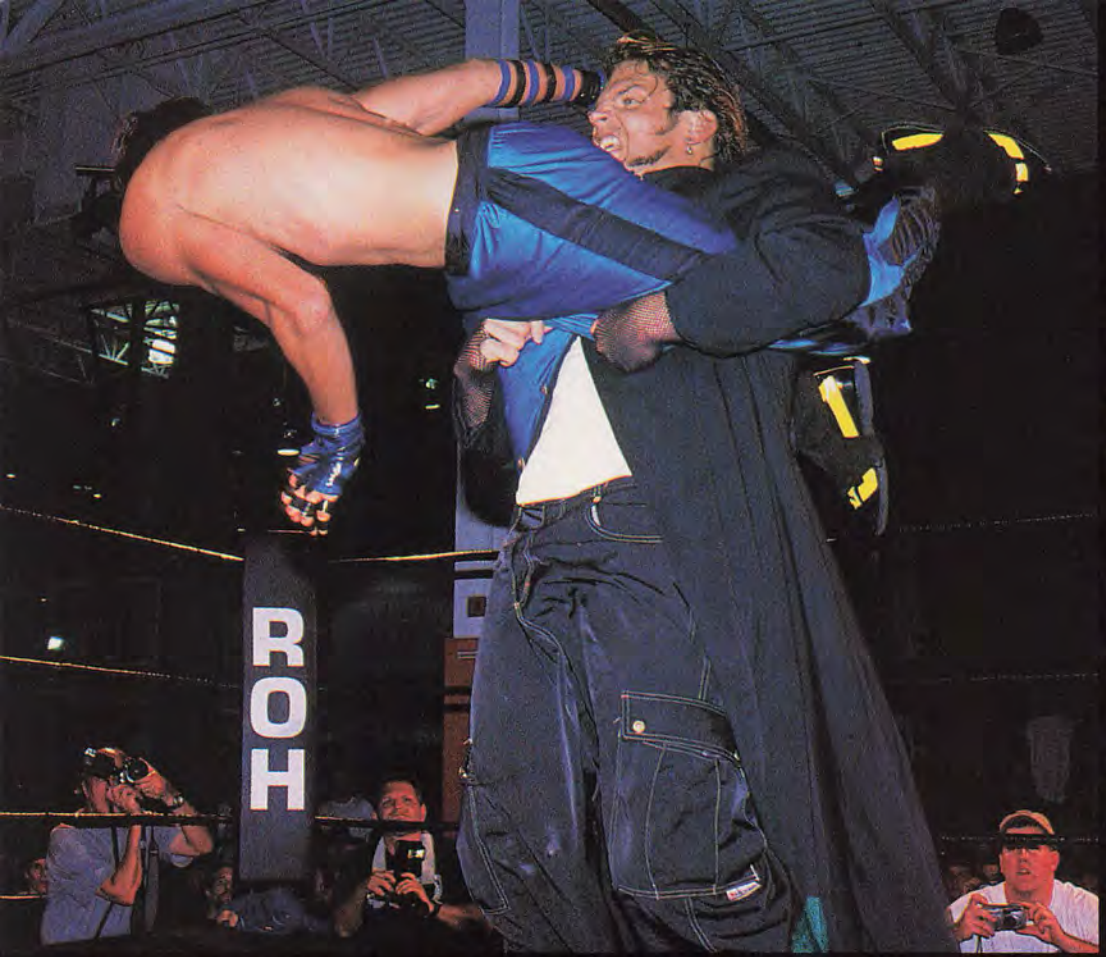
The boos and nasty chants had already started by the time Jeff Hardy began working over his protege, Krazy K (above). And by the time he landed the move that so many fans used to describe as breathtaking, his swanton bomb (right), ROH fans in Elizabeth, New Jersey, had seen more than enough of him.

By Dan Murphy

JEFF HARDY HAD been looking forward to wrestling for Ring of Honor for weeks. Getting his release from WWE, although hardly unexpected by the time it finally happened, had shaken his confidence a bit. All he wanted to do was rid himself of all the distractions and get back to one of his first true loves: wrestling. A full-time comeback was the furthest thing from his mind, but one night of pure athletic wrestling would help his psyche immensely.

Ring of Honor seemed to be the perfect fit for him. With its emphasis on athletic, gimmick-free competition, Hardy thought he'd be able to find focus without concerning himself with backstage politics and the rigorous WWE travel schedule.

When he snuck a peak at the capacity crowd inside the Rexplex in Elizabeth, New



What could have been a match and experience that refueled Hardy's passion for wrestling turned into a nightmare and a disaster. Who could blame him for being a little off once he got that unexpected reaction from the crowd?

Jersey, on July 19, his spine tingled with excitement. About 1,200 fans had turned out, many, he was told, just to see him, to join him as he entered this new phase of his career.

Or to make that new phase of his career a living hell.

Hardy had been scheduled to face his protege, Krazy K, and Joey Matthews in a triple threat match on the card in Elizabeth. But the moment he made his way to the ring (wearing his old Will o' the Wisp mask), the warm reception Hardy was expecting turned ugly. Many of the fans immediately showered the four-time WWE World tag champion with a chorus of boos and catcalls, chanting "You got fired!" and "We want Matt!" at the bewildered Hardy Boy and drowning out the minority who cheered him.

When Matthews trapped him on the ropes, Hardy could only cover up and try to protect himself from the assault. He probably wished he could have crawled under the ring and disappeared at this point.

Every time Hardy hit an offensive move, the fans booed mercilessly. When Hardy scored the pin following his signature swanton bomb in what wasn't exactly a scintillating match, the fans reacted with fury. The message they were sending was clear: Jeff Hardy is not welcome in Ring of Honor. At least not now.

Hardy did his best to work the crowd's reaction into the match, playing more of an arrogant heel and taunting the fans, but he was clearly not expecting the type of reaction he received, and it had to have affected his performance. After the match, he wondered what he had done to earn the wrath of the fans.

"I really don't know why I got that kind of a reaction," Hardy said. "Maybe the fans see me as an outsider or think I got some kind of special treatment. Maybe they think I'm a guy who hasn't earned his stripes in Ring of Honor. Maybe they're just jealous because most of their girlfriends would rather be with me than with them. I don't know. All I know is that I never did a thing to deserve that kind of heat. But it's a free country. If they want to boo me, they can. I just wish I knew *why* they were booing me."

Not too long ago, Hardy had been one of the darlings of WWE. On April 10, 2001, he scored one of the biggest upsets in recent memory by beating Triple-H for the Intercontinental title on *Smackdown*. At the time, Hardy looked like he had the world within his reach. He appeared

ready for a strong I-C title run, and he was considered one of the most innovative and exciting wrestlers in WWE.

But instead of building on that win and possibly pursuing the World title, Hardy dropped the I-C title back to Triple-H just six days later, and the rematches were few and far between. In fact, Hardy wasn't even given a match on the 2001 Backlash pay-per-view, even though the event took place just 13 days after he dropped the I-C belt. Hardy had to content himself with the hardcore title briefly, but fell into a slump after dropping several matches to Rob Van Dam. In the meantime, Jeff's brother, Matt—long considered the weaker link in that Hardy Boyz team—started to come into his own as a singles performer.

The brand extension draft landed both Hardys on the Raw side, but Matt soon betrayed his brother and defected to Smackdown. Jeff continued to struggle on Raw while Matt became a dominant and versatile cruiserweight. Matt's success drew even more attention to Jeff's fall from grace. Reports that Jeff had lost his passion for wrestling and was more interested in making music with his band began to circulate, along with rumors that his body was suffering from years of dangerous bumps and falls. At times, he appeared listless in the ring, as if he was sleepwalking his way through matches.

Hardy lost weight. He looked pale and tired. He distanced himself further from his fans by wearing fluorescent face and body paint. Some of the women who had always cheered and cooed when he removed his shirt began to wonder what had happened to him. Instead of being a daredevil with boy band looks, Jeff became increasingly eccentric. He went from being a wrestler whose matches no one wanted to miss to an expendable mid-carder.

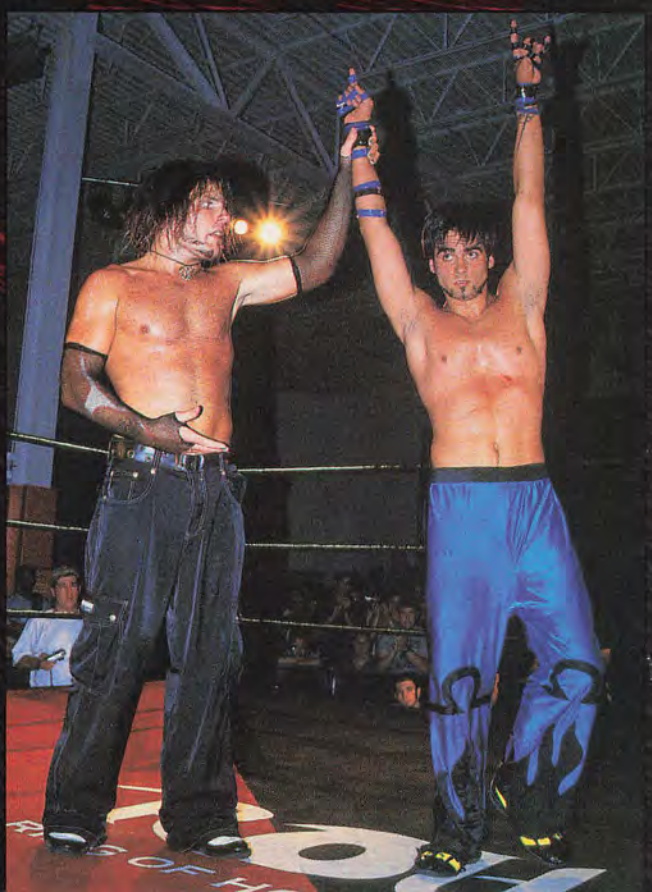
"Jeff Hardy is a freak," one fan posted when the subject of his loss of popularity was broached on a prominent wrestling newsboard. "Being camera-friendly can only open so many doors. He doesn't even look like he's trying anymore. He goes out there, misses moves, wrestles sloppy, and dances like a fool. Wherever he wrestles, he's using up a roster spot that could be filled by a more talented wrestler who actually cares and doesn't just go through the motions."

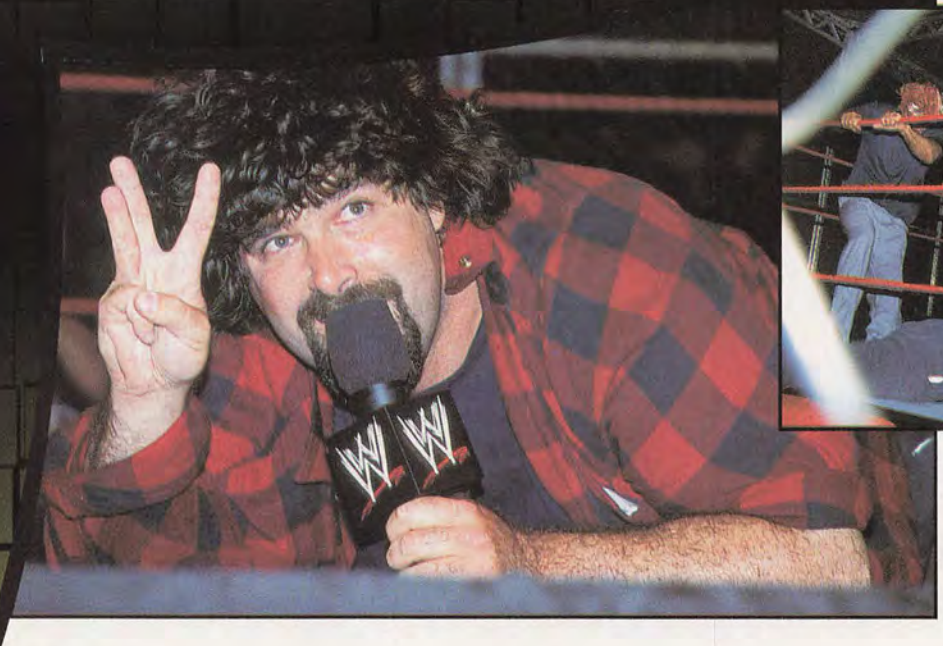
While he stopped short of saying he was hurt by the fans' reaction, Hardy clearly was dejected.

"I've never minded getting booed," Hardy said. "I just don't know why people have such personal issues with me. I just wanted to go out and put on a hell of a match with Krazy and Joey, and I'm a bad guy? What have I done to make the fans hate me?"

And where does he go from here? □

Hardy confused the crowd just a bit when he came out wearing his old Will o' the Wisp mask (above). But the fans weren't confused about what they thought of the match once it was over and Jeff raised Krazy K's arm (below).





Foley got beaten down by Evolution on the night he returned to WWE (above), but he taunted Triple-H even after they left him laying (left). In subsequent weeks, it was young Randy Orton whom he focused on.

Back In The Mic Of Time...

to teach these young-ins some respect!

By Will Welsh

"IN THE *NICK* of time" is a colloquialism with a rich history. According to linguistic experts, the phrase originated from the idea that a "nick" was something small and precise, and that "in the nick" meant that something was precisely where it should be. The addition of "time" to the phrase, meaning that something's precisely *where* it should be *when* it should be there, completed the expression as we know it today.

However, our "in the *Mick* of time" means something a little different, because Mick Foley isn't small (he's chunky), nor is he precise (remember that ugly crash landing through the "Hell In A Cell" cage?), and he's found himself in far too many positions and predicaments that he shouldn't have been in (we couldn't even begin to name them all).

Foley's return to WWE this summer, however, was exactly "in the Mick of time," because as WWE's roster has gotten younger, the need for senior leader-

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> "When it came time to make a difference and single out one member of Evolution, Foley didn't call out Triple-H or Ric Flair... No, the hardcore legend looked right into the eyes of Randy Orton and called the kid's bluff."

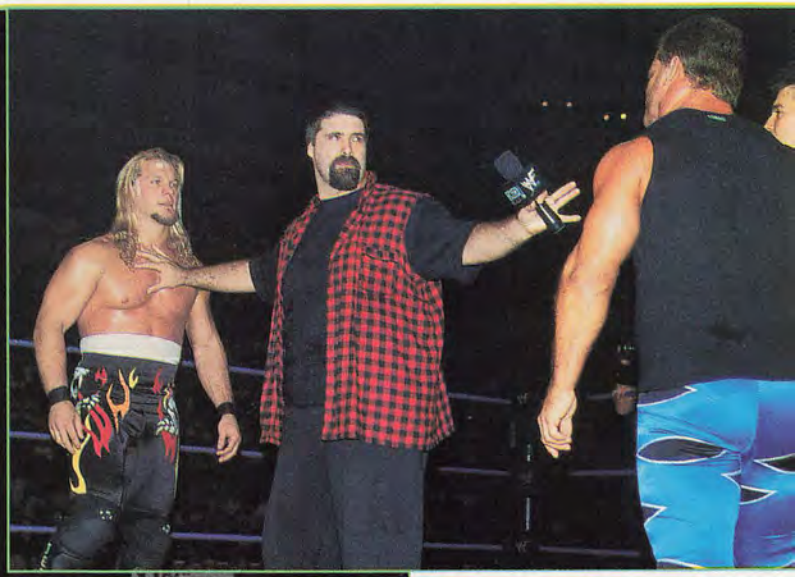
ship has gotten increasingly bigger. By the time Foley arrived to officiate the "Hell In A Cell" match between Triple-H and Kevin Nash at Bad Blood, the need had become a hole so large that it was threatening to suck all of WWE down into it.

Thank goodness the rotund Foley didn't shave off too many pounds, huh? A few more cans of Slim-Fast and he might have been skinny enough to slide right through that hole—never to be seen or heard from again!

But all kidding aside, Foley did show up in WWE precisely when WWE needed him to reappear. If there's anybody who can teach WWE's crop of young studs what being a professional wrestler is all about—if anyone can make them realize that you can't just expect to be respected, that you have to earn it—that man is Foley.

"There's no doubt that WWE's younger wrestlers—and especially the younger wrestlers with Raw—need better role models," said WWE expert Thomas Pilliard. "If all the veterans weren't still trying to jockey for position, things might be different, but they are. Triple-H and Kevin Nash love manipulating people, Scott Steiner has never been confused with a role model, and Shawn Michaels is too busy trying to make up for past deeds to be of much help. The younger guys need veteran leadership, and WWE is sadly deficient."

Of course, in professional wrestling, leadership is always hard to come by, but that's no excuse to let the youngsters run amuck. When that happens—and it has been happening—things



When Foley was commissioner, it was his job to keep young guys (and veterans) in line (above), though he often used the position to show off his quick wit. One of the last roles he filled before he took a long hiatus from WWE was that of guest referee for a bra and panties match (left). He's more serious in 2003.

don't correct themselves. There's no magic pill to make everything better. Just look at the WWE's newest wrestlers: Almost every one of them believes that he's the hot, young rookie who is going to be the next overnight sensation. What they don't know is that Kurt Angle and Brock Lesnar were the exceptions. You usually have to spend years toiling in the mid-card ranks before you become a main-eventer. Guys like John Cena, La Resistance, Sean O'Haire, Mark Jindrak, the Bashams, Johnny Stamboli, and especially Randy Orton expect to be headlining pay-per-views and winning Raw and Smackdown championships already.

It just doesn't work that quickly. It's not their time. And if they don't straighten up, it might never be their time.

Foley recognized all this when he returned, and he was concerned. He may now be an author who occasionally shows up for wrestling matches, but wrestling is still in his blood. WWE is still his home, and he doesn't like having to worry about the company's future. He wants WWE to prosper, because if WWE falls, it might very well take the entire wrestling industry down with it.

That's why Foley acted the way he did this summer. Sure, he traded words and punches with all three members of Evolution and officiated the match between Helmsley and Nash, but that was bonus material. When it came time to make a difference and single out one member of Evolution, Foley didn't call out Triple-H or Ric Flair. Oh, no. And he didn't waste time throwing out zany one-line zingers to get some of his famous cheap pops. No, the hardcore legend looked right into the eyes of Randy Orton and called the kid's bluff.

"You've got all the talent in the world, all the potential in the world, but as far as heart, all you've shown me is the ability to sit at home for months at a time saying, 'Oh, my arm hurts' or 'Oh, my leg hurts,'" Foley screamed at Orton. "Until you've worn WWE gold around your waist, don't you dare step foot inside my ring."

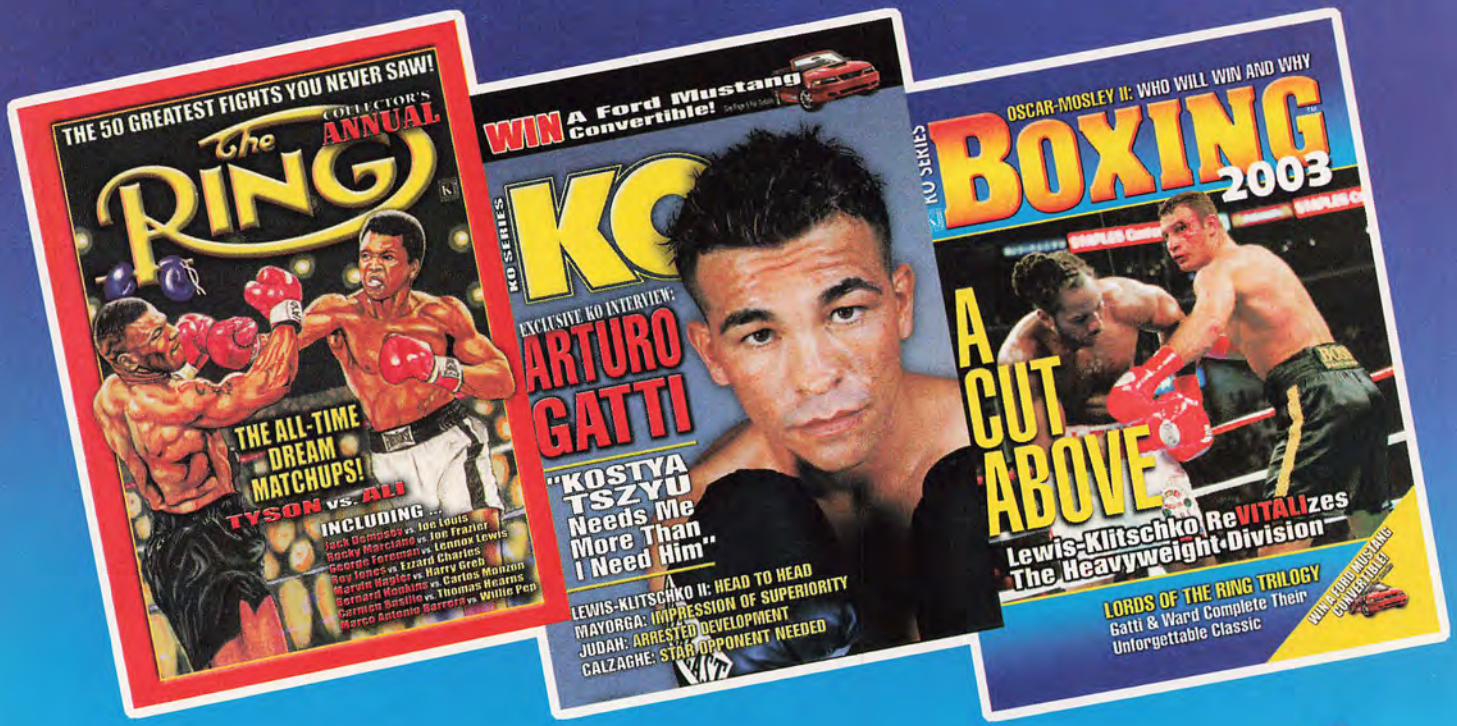
Foley was screaming at Orton, but believe us when we tell you that message was directed at every new WWE superstar on both rosters—and we hope that they took notice. The not-so-subtle touch of jamming Mr. Socko down Orton's throat later on during the same show was Foley's exclamation point.

Unfortunately, Foley left to promote his new book, *Tietam Brown,* not long after that night. But in his wake, he left two implied warnings: one to his fellow veterans, and one to WWE's young guns.

•To the veterans, Foley's warning was this: Do better than you're currently doing, because if you don't, you're not only failing the sport, you're also failing your legacy.

•To the young guns, Foley left this message: Behave yourselves, because Mick Foley is watching—and if … no, *when* he comes back, he'll be bringing Cactus Jack and Mankind with him. □

Everyone remembers the classic bloodbaths Cactus Jack and Triple-H had in 2000, but a few years earlier, Mankind taught a "young" and not-quite-established Triple-H a few lessons (right). Randy Orton and others, you've been warned!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Achievement 2003

Vote For The Year's Best Wrestlers & Matches!

The pressure is on! *You* are on the hotseat! This is *your* chance to change the course of the history of this industry, so you can't afford to screw this up! It's time for you to vote in 11 categories for the PRO WRESTLING ILLUSTRATED Achievement 2003 Awards!

NOW IT'S YOUR turn. That's right, it's time once again for you, the wrestling fans, to make your voices heard as you cast your ballots for the 2003 Achievement Awards—and as we all know, this year has featured a lot of good stuff, some very bad, and a little bit of ugly. Bill Goldberg made his long-awaited WWE debut … at the same time Steve Austin announced he was done as a wrestler. Kurt Angle (torn up neck and all) and Brock Lesnar gave us so many thrilling matches on the Smackdown side, while Triple-H continued to dominate the Raw brand. The folks at NWA-TNA made us look forward to Wednesday nights. Mick Foley returned … and we bade a final farewell to some more of our all-time favorites.

There's no doubt that 2003 has been an exciting year. That's all the more reason why we want to know what you think.

Who deserves to be named Wrestler of the Year? Can Triple-H be denied? Is there a tag team that stood out above all the rest, maybe even one that America has wanted to see most every week? Who has inspired you the most? Who has improved more than anyone else? Which diva dazzled in 2003? Which match commands the title Match of the Year?

In this special section, descriptions of the various categories are included, along with a list of some of this year's top candidates and some reasons why you might want to vote for them. Read the descriptions and take some time to think about your choices for the various awards, and feel free to select candidates that we *haven't* suggested. Then cast your votes on the ballot provided on page 57 and mail it in.

Don't forget to include your special *Unofficial Official* awards. This category demands a lot of creativity. Make up your own awards and name the recipients. Don't be afraid to be outlandish or ridiculous—the more creative the better. Some of the better awards from last year included: Couldn't Find Nicer Buns At A French Bakery: Dawn Marie; I Fought The Law And The Law Won: Steve Austin; Most Likely To Bear My Love Children: Stacy Keibler; My Worst Nightmare: Fabulous Moolah and Mae Young in HLA. You get the point.

And also remember to include your outrageous predictions for 2004, and as many humorous Top 10 lists as you can come up with. The stranger the better!

Results of the Achievement 2003 fan poll will be printed in the spectacular year-end issue of *PWI*, cover-dated April 2004. That hits newsstands on or about January 13. In order for your votes to count, we must receive your ballot no later than December 15, but the sooner we get it, the better.

This is the most respected and prestigious fan poll in all of professional wrestling, and the results will be closely examined by fans and professionals alike. Every vote counts. Make sure *your* voice is heard!

Rookie of the Year

The man or woman you select as Rookie of the Year must fulfill two qualifications: He/she must not have been a runner-up in last year's vote and should have yet to complete his/her second year as a pro by the time December 31, 2003, rolls around. A vote for Rookie of the Year is a vote for a possible future superstar.

The Candidate	The Skinny
Matt Cappotelli	*Tough Enough III* winner didn't do much against Dreamer or Rico
Zach Gowen	Can he have long-term success in WWE?
Sylvan Grenier	He'll probably get Rene Dupree's vote at least
John Hennigan	Will he fare better than Maven and Jackie Gayda?
Mark Magnus	Syracuse native has impressed in OVW
Matt Morgan	*Tough Enough* alumnus with greatest long-term potential?
Bob Sapp	Tremendous prospect, virtually unknown outside Japan
Trinity	Certainly a brilliant high spot artist

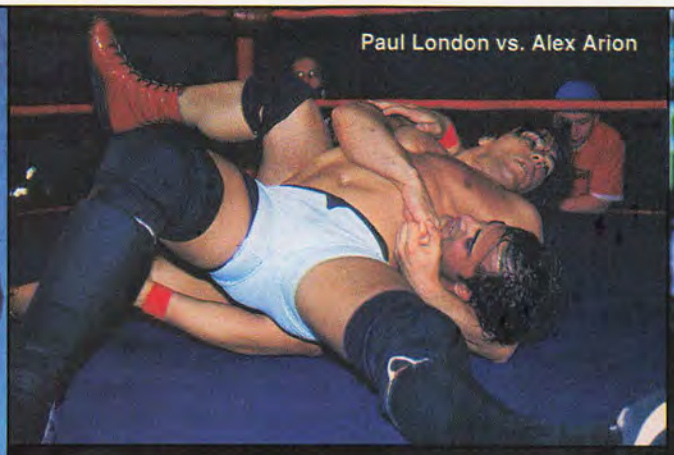
Achievement 2003

Most Improved Wrestler of the Year

For Most Improved Wrestler of the Year, pick someone who, throughout 2003, has worked the hardest to improve himself or herself as a wrestler … the man or woman who has struggled to learn several new maneuvers … who has captured a major title for the first time. This wrestler can be a heel or a scientific wrestler, but the improvement should have been considerable and notable.

The Candidate	The Skinny
Shelton Benjamin & Charlie Haas	Talented singles prospects formed surprisingly cohesive team
John Cena	Former OVW champ went toe-to-toe with big Brock and UT
Matt Hardy	Wasn't he supposed to be the weaker Hardy?
Gail Kim	Won women's title in first televised WWE match
La Resistance	Grenier and Dupree grabbed WWE gold in huge upset
Brock Lesnar	Once just a powerhouse, now a very well-rounded star
Paul London	Ring of Honor regular won Super 8 and signed with WWE
Rodney Mack	Former Redd Dogg turned heads with "White Boy Challenges"
Red	Proved he can handle foes twice his size
Chris Sabin	"The Future" made for strong TNA X division champion
Victoria	Former valet dominated the competition in WWE

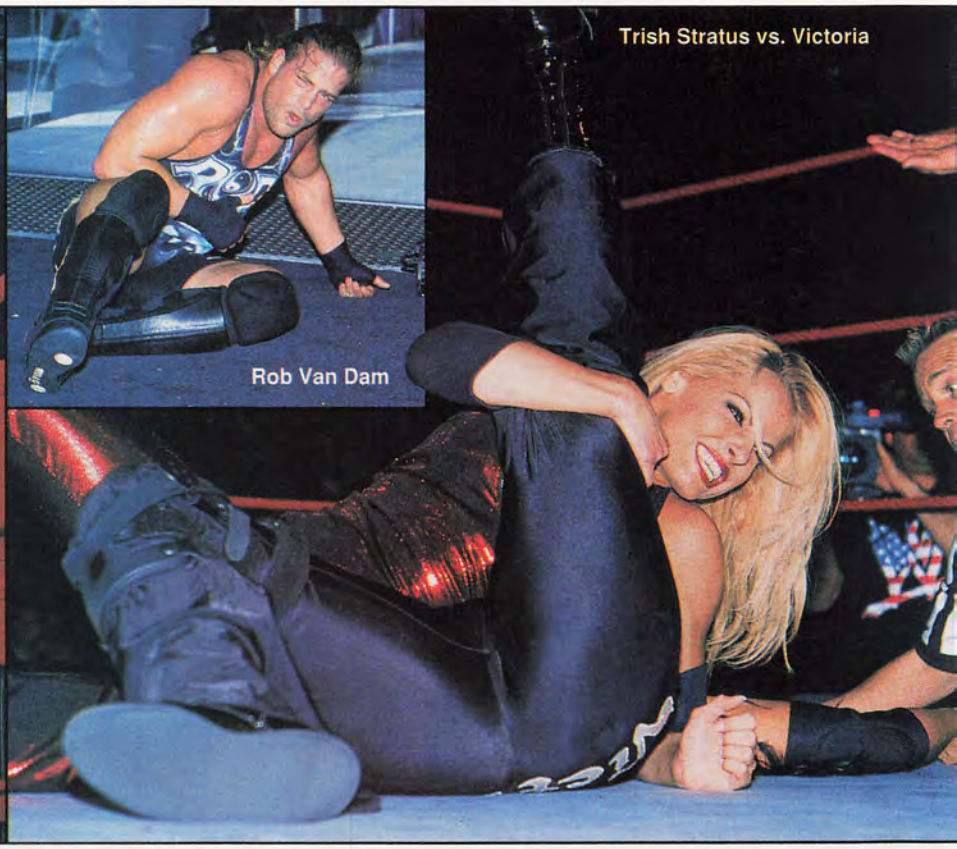
Red


Paul London vs. Alex Arion

Victoria vs. Jazz

Jeff Jarrett

Rob Van Dam


Trish Stratus vs. Victoria

Most Popular Wrestler of the Year

Popularity used to be self-explanatory: cheers, adoration, and the love of the fans. But in recent years, some of the biggest heels have been among the sport's most popular stars. This is still a special award in that the winner is a success in the hearts of the fans, regardless of his or her success in the ring. The wrestler (or team) who receives the loudest cheers is the best choice for this category.

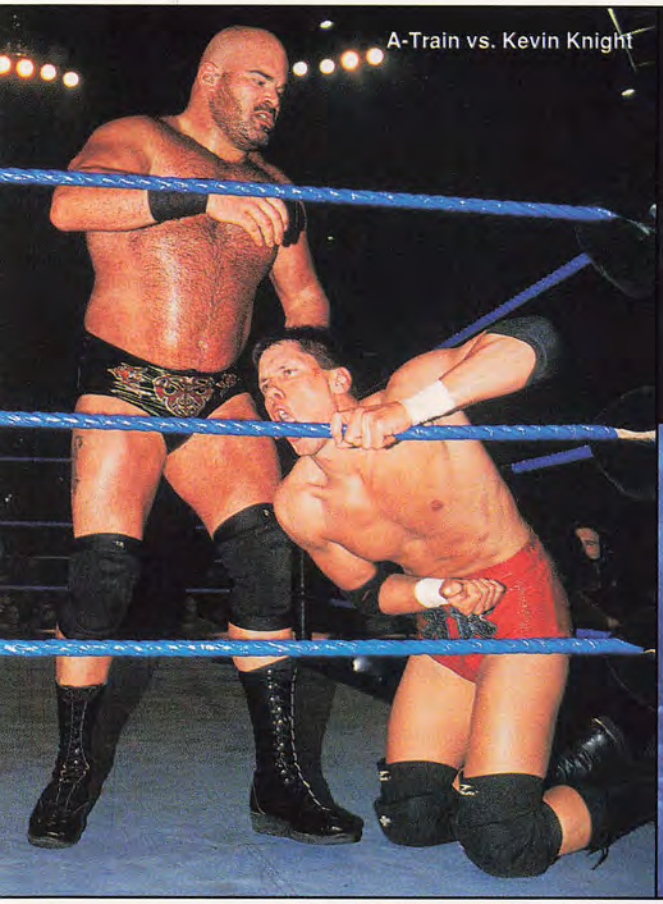
The Candidate	The Skinny
Kurt Angle	Embraced by fans once he dumped Team Angle
Steve Austin	Just as popular as GM as he was as wrestler
Booker T	Spinnarooni now more electrifying than people's elbow
Chris Benoit	Standing ovation at Rumble brought tears to his eyes
The Dudley Boyz	Foiled Chief Morley, stood up for U.S. against La Resistance
Hulk Hogan	"Hulkamania" (and "Mr. Americamania") ran wild again in '03
The Hurricane	Consistently one of WWE's most entertaining performers
Jeff Jarrett	Has stood up to the bad guys in NWA-TNA
Brock Lesnar	Fans marvel at his manhandling of Big Show
Shawn Michaels	Religious convictions now guide his in-ring actions
Rey Misterio Jr.	West Coast pop and 619 re-energized his career
Trish Stratus	Always made sure to keep fans Stratus-fied
The Undertaker	Now into second "Decade Of Destruction"
Rob Van Dam	Laid-back RVD is hero to easygoing fans everywhere
Torrie Wilson	Posed nude, but maintains her wholesome image

Achievement 2003

Most Hated Wrestler of the Year

The flip side of popularity: jeers and utter contempt from the public. Some wrestlers openly court the fans' hatred; others just don't care what they think. Who hears the loudest boos? That really is the only consideration in choosing your Most Hated Wrestler of the Year.

The Candidate	The Skinny
A-Train	Wouldn't listen to requests that he shave his back
Shelton Benjamin & Charlie Haas	Fans don't say they suck for no reason …
The Big Show	Tried to bully and injure everyone he met
Eric Bischoff	Did all he could to antagonize Austin and fans
Triple-H	Award seems tailor-made for "The Game"
Jazz	Proud to call herself WWE's "biggest bitch"
Chris Jericho	"Highlight Reel" gave us one more reason to hate Y2J
Kane	Sank to new depths by burning Ross, tombstoning Linda
Kid Kash	Treatment of Trinity went way over the line
La Resistance	Flag-waving Frenchies capitalized on international hostilities
Vince McMahon	Tried to kill "Hulkamania" and humiliate Zach
Randy Orton	Braggart ran interference for Triple-H
Vince Russo	Sadly, his sabbatical proved to be quite brief
Test	Won't win many popularity contests by hurting Stacy
Victoria	Tried to mangle Trish Stratus' pretty face


A-Train vs. Kevin Knight

Test vs. Chris Jericho

Kid Kash

Torrie Wilson with Funaki

Stacy Keibler

Nidia

Woman of the Year

Women are playing more prominent roles in wrestling than ever before. They're beautiful, they're tough, and in many cases, they are very, very influential. You can vote for a woman who wrestles regularly or one who works mostly as a valet/manager/personal assistant. We just ask that you vote for the woman you think made the biggest impact.

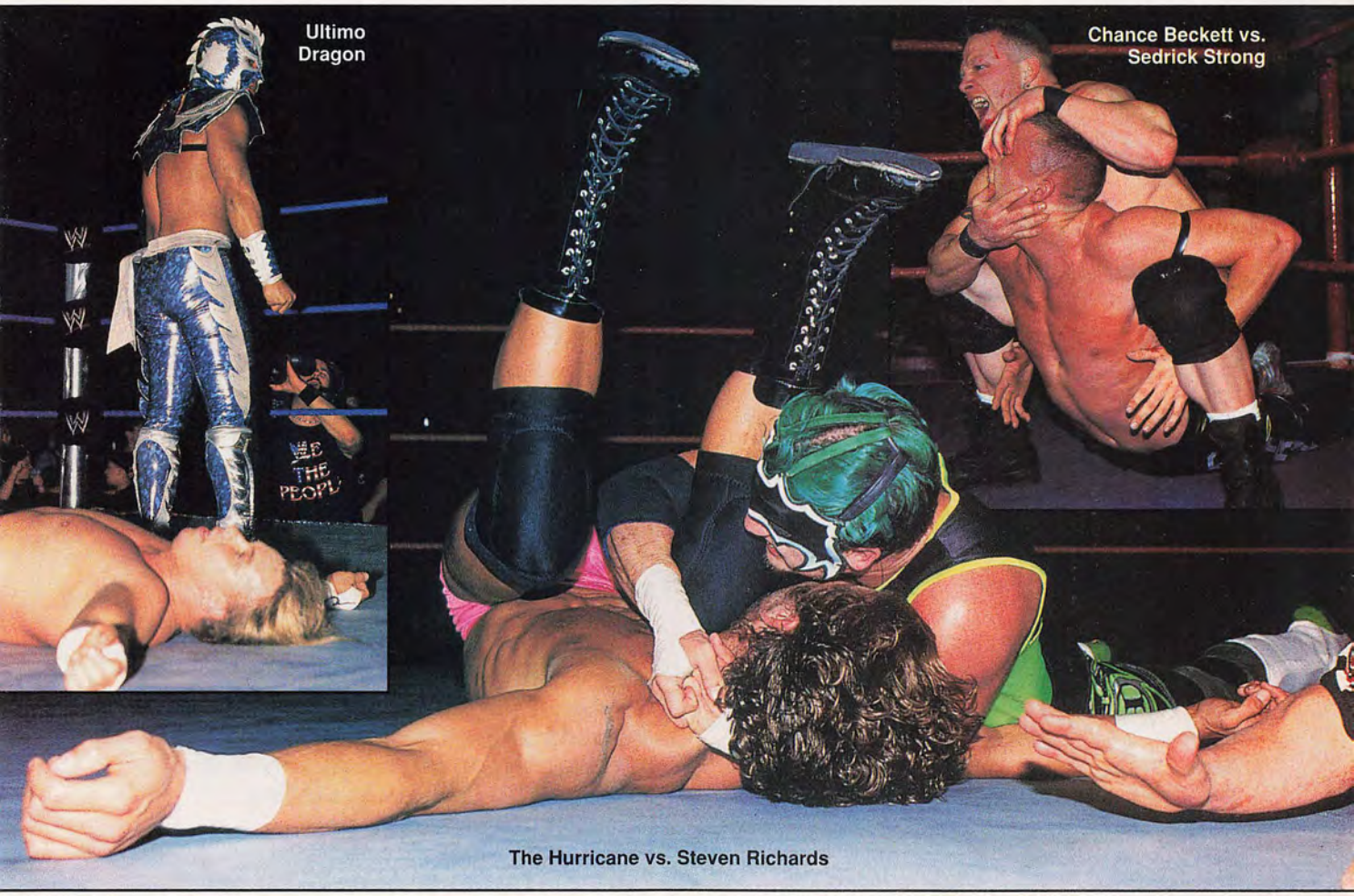
The Candidate	The Skinny
Dawn Marie	Hasn't recovered from Al Wilson, *um*, tragedy
Ivory	Former GLOW girl had nice winning streak
Jazz	Only injuries, it seems, can keep her down
Stacy Keibler	Ring entrances (and exits) never failed to pop crowds
Gail Kim	Came out of nowhere to claim women's title
Stephanie McMahon	Smackdown GM wasn't afraid to stand up to Daddy
Nidia	Noble's squeeze has enjoyed her financial windfall
Nikita	Blonde WWE prospect looking good in OVW matches
Sable	Proved to be suitable sidekick for Vince
Trish Stratus	Showed a lot by beating Jazz, Victoria at 'Mania
Synn	Still making life miserable for OVW fan favorites
Trinity	TNA daredevil could be second coming of Lita
Victoria	Unstable beauty dominated women's division early in '03
Torrie Wilson	Latest WWE diva to grace pages of *Playboy*

Achievement 2003

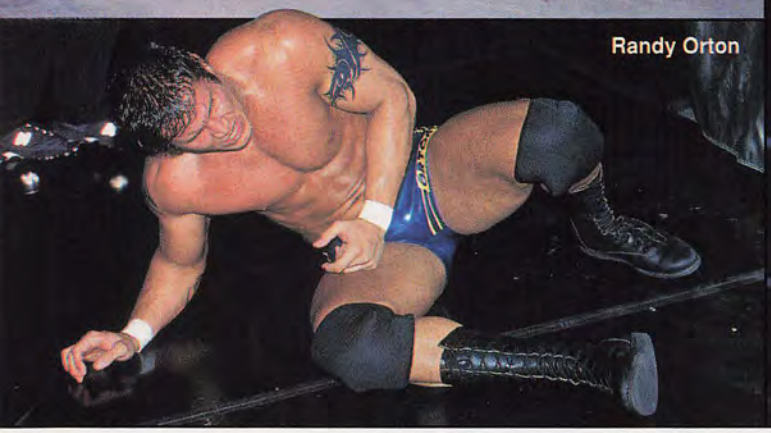
Inspirational Wrestler of the Year

Wrestling is an open arena in which an athlete's personal and physical strengths and weaknesses are on display for all to see. Sometimes a wrestler comes up against a seemingly insurmountable obstacle in his or her career. How he or she deals with that roadblock—and whether he or she can turn a failure into a success—can offer inspiration to fans everywhere.

The Candidate	The Skinny
Kurt Angle	Risked paralysis at WrestleMania, delivered a classic
Steve Austin	Made perhaps his last match an unforgettable one
Chance Beckett	Wouldn't let gruesome chin gash stop him at Super 8
Desire	Fractured her back in TNA, didn't stop match
Zach Gowen	For goodness' sake, he only has one leg!
The Hurricane	Never backs down or betrays his heroic values
Brock Lesnar	Conducted himself like the true champ he was
Rey Misterio Jr.	Refused to be shown up by Big Show
Spanky	Would do anything for a Smackdown contract
A.J. Styles	Forgotten man in Raven-Jarrett feud got the gold
Ultimo Dragon	Wouldn't quit until he made his mark in WWE



Raven vs. Jeff Jarrett



Randy Orton

Sean O'Haire & Roddy Piper

Comeback of the Year

Here's an opportunity to honor a competitor who had a big year after suffering through a long losing streak, being in a long period of stagnation, or being out of the sport entirely. The man or woman selected for this award must be presently active on a full-time basis.

The Candidate	The Skinny
Kurt Angle	Career-threatening injury kept him out just three months
Justin Credible	Made many TNA fans stop calling him Aldo
Lucy Furr	The former Daffney got a developmental deal
Glenn Gilberti	Disco finally being taken seriously in TNA?
Bill Goldberg	Hard to believe "Da Man" was gone for two years
Billy Gunn	"Mr. Ass" is injury-free, and Torrie seems pleased
Kenta Kobashi	More knee surgeries couldn't quell his burning spirit
Kevin Nash	"Big Daddy Cool" gave Triple-H trouble
Sean O'Haire	We're not telling you anything you didn't already know …
Randy Orton	Thank goodness for weekly RNN injury reports!
Raven	Went from part-time *Heat* guy to top TNA villain
Rhyno	Man-beast showing no ill effects from spinal surgery
Sable	Didn't she once sue the company that's signing her check?
Elix Skipper	Now says he's TNA's best pound-for-pound star
Scott Steiner	Mounted stiff challenge to Trips on two PPVs
Ultimo Dragon	Botched surgery didn't end his career after all
The Undertaker	Every time he's counted out, he comes back stronger

Achievement 2003

Feud of the Year

Every year there are wars that capture the imagination of fans for months on end. The criterion is simple: Your choice for Feud of the Year should be that one continuing series of battles (verbal and/or physical)—lasting at least two months—that you feel has dominated the careers of the participants to the exclusion of all other activities. Special note: The wrestlers you select for Feud of the Year need not have wrestled each other numerous times.

The Candidate	The Skinny
Kurt Angle vs. Chris Benoit	Couldn't get along even when they were partners
Kurt Angle vs. Brock Lesnar	Ultimate battle between Olympian and NCAA champ
Steve Austin vs. Eric Bischoff	From comedy skits to violence, we never knew what to expect
Shelton Benjamin & Charlie Haas vs. Los Guerreros	Lucha Libre masters vs. former amateur standouts
The Big Show vs. Brock Lesnar	Ring literally couldn't contain (or support) their feud
Booker T vs. Christian	Both desperate for big wins in evenly matched series
Booker T vs. Triple-H	This one got uncomfortable to watch—and listen to—at times
D-Lo Brown vs. A.J. Styles	First big test for new NWA champ Styles
Justin Credible vs. Jerry Lynn	Former ECW champs spilled lots of blood in TNA
Matt Hardy vs. Rey Misterio Jr.	Respect was at stake in this cruiserweight war
Triple-H vs. Kevin Nash	Wars between former partners dominated Raw for months
Hulk Hogan vs. Vince McMahon	Bloody WrestleMania clash was 20 years in the making
Jeff Jarrett vs. Raven	Their battles were the most intense in TNA's brief history
Chris Jericho vs. Shawn Michaels	HBK made Y2J rip that torch out of his hands
Frankie Kazarian vs. Chris Sabin	"Future" vs. "Future" in ECWA, WWA, and TNA
Stephanie McMahon vs. Sable	And they had a surprisingly decent match at Vengeance
C.M. Punk vs. Raven	Raven must have underrated this youngster
Scott Steiner vs. Test	With Stacy at stake, things were bound to get ugly
Trish Stratus vs. Victoria	Rivalry started on fitness circuit, boiled over in ring

Justin Credible vs. Jerry Lynn

Chris Jericho vs. Shawn Michaels

Chris Sabin vs. Frankie Kazarian

Match of the Year

Every wrestling fan, at one time or another, thinks, *That was one of the greatest matches I've ever seen.* If that happened to you this year, you know what this category is all about. The bout chosen as Match of the Year might well have historical significance (such as a major title change or a loser-leaves-the-company match), though that is not a specific requirement. ***(Editor's note: Please remember to give strong consideration to matches that occur after the press date of this issue.)***

The Candidate	The Skinny
Kurt Angle vs. Chris Benoit (January 19)	Both got a well-deserved standing O
Shinya Hashimoto vs. Keiji Muto (February 23)	Are they getting better with age?
Kenta Kobashi vs. Mitsuharu Misawa (March 1)	Their last (and maybe greatest) singles clash
Raven vs. A.J. Styles (March 19)	They did some great things with a ladder
Chris Jericho vs. Shawn Michaels (March 30)	A true dream match for Y2J (but he lost)
Hulk Hogan vs. Vince McMahon (March 30)	This one actually lived up to the hype
Steve Austin vs. The Rock (March 30)	The last match in a long, wonderful rivalry
Kurt Angle vs. Brock Lesnar (March 30)	Angle injury added to the intrigue
American Dragon vs. Paul London (April 12)	Three-fall mat classic in Ring of Honor
Jeff Jarrett vs. Raven (April 30)	The most anticipated match in TNA history
Shelton Benjamin & Charlie Haas vs. Eddie Guerrero & Tajiri (May 18)	Judgment Day ladder match didn't disappoint
Ric Flair vs. Triple-H (May 19)	"Naitch" wouldn't lay down for "The Game"
Frankie Kazarian vs. Jerry Lynn vs. Johnny Swinger vs. Chris Sabin	That's right, a candidate from the WWA!
Matt Hardy vs. Rey Misterio Jr. (June 3)	They gave them a *Smackdown* main event
The Big Show vs. Brock Lesnar (June 10)	The night the ring collapsed under them
Ric Flair vs. Shawn Michaels (June 15)	A match many waited years to see
Chris Harris & James Storm vs. Christopher Daniels & Elix Skipper (June 25)	An old school style cage match in TNA
D-Lo Brown vs. A.J. Styles (July 23)	Three falls, all exciting, for the NWA belt
Shelton Benjamin & Charlie Haas vs. Billy Kidman & Rey Misterio Jr. (July 27)	Clash of styles? Not at all!
Kurt Angle vs. The Big Show vs. Brock Lesnar (July 27)	Even Big Show held up his end quite nicely

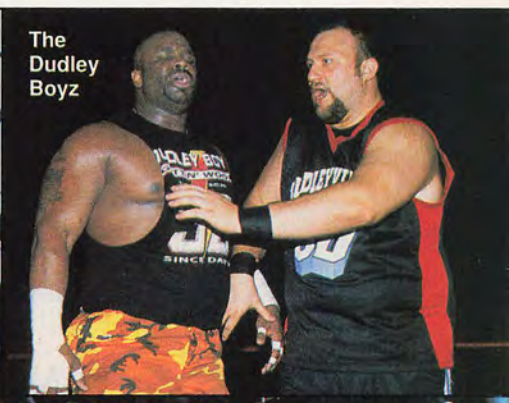
Achievement 2003

Tag Team of the Year

Experience, skill, and success all count in this category, though whether a team is scientific or rulebreaking should make no difference. A Tag Team of the Year should be more than simply a great pairing; it should dominate the federation in which it competes—and, truly, the sport itself.

The Candidate	The Skinny
America's Most Wanted	Storm, Harris the surprise top team in TNA
The Basham Brothers	Solid duo in WWE, mortal enemies in OVW
Shelton Benjamin & Charlie Haas	Probably the strongest technical team in the U.S.
Masa Chono & Hiroyoshi Tenzan	Long-time IWGP kingpins are darkhorses
Christopher Daniels & Elix Skipper	S.E.X. members always quickened pulses
The Dudley Boyz	Reunited and it still feels so good
Eddie & Chavo Guerrero Jr.	Hardly needed to cheat to win most of time
Chris Jericho & Christian	Too bad they didn't stick together longer
Kane & Rob Van Dam	Good run until Kane lost his mask (and his marbles)
Taiyo Kea & Satoshi Kojima	Dominated All-Japan in first half of year
La Resistance	Grenier, Dupree wasted no time winning Raw gold
Chuck Palumbo & Johnny Stamboli	FBI clique really fizzled fast
William Regal & Lance Storm	Former Un-Americans had success early in the year

Shelton Benjamin & Charlie Haas

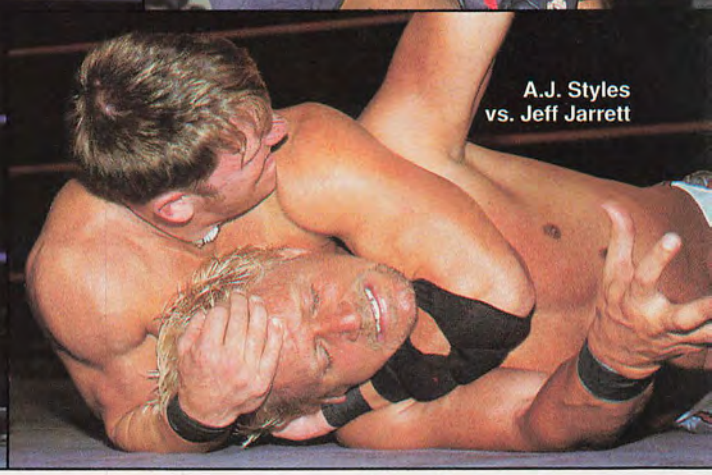


The Dudley Boyz

Kane vs. Lance Storm

Brock Lesnar vs. Shelton Benjamin

Booker T



A.J. Styles vs. Jeff Jarrett

Wrestler of the Year

This is the top honor: The winner of this award should be the one person who has personified the essence of professional wrestling throughout 2003. Talent, skill, and achievement are the three prerequisites for this category. The competitor chosen as Wrestler of the Year should be the most well-rounded athlete in the sport—and the most accomplished of the year.

The Candidate	The Skinny
Kurt Angle	Even spinal surgery couldn't slow his momentum
The Big Show	Regained championship form by humbling Lesnar
Booker T	Made Triple-H feel some heat at WrestleMania
Shinya Hashimoto	Triple Crown win over Muta was a major accomplishment
Triple-H	May be despised, but you can't argue with success
Jeff Jarrett	Unified the NWA and WWA titles, among other feats
Chris Jericho	Added to his "Living Legend" by beating HBK
Kenta Kobashi	Inventor of burning hammer is top dog in NOAH
Brock Lesnar	"Next Big Thing" has been Smackdown's biggest sensation
Keiji Muto	President of All-Japan still a success on both sides of Pacific
A.J. Styles	Russo's new "Chosen One" has been strong NWA champ

Official Fan Ballot

Send ballot to: **Achievement 2003 Vote** • c/o Pro Wrestling Illustrated • Box 1148 • Fort Washington, PA 19034
E-mail to: **pwiqueen@aol.com**

Rookie of the Year: _____

Most Improved Wrestler of the Year: _____

Most Popular Wrestler of the Year: _____

Most Hated Wrestler of the Year: _____

Inspirational Wrestler of the Year: _____

Comeback Wrestler of the Year: _____

Woman of the Year: _____

Match of the Year: _____

Feud of the Year: _____

Tag Team of the Year: _____

Wrestler of the Year: _____

My "Unofficial Official" Awards for 2003: _____

My Predictions for 2004: _____

Additional Comments (please include top 10 lists on separate sheets of paper): _____

NAME _____ **AGE** _____

STREET _____

CITY _____ **STATE** _____ **ZIP** _____ **E-MAIL ADDRESS** _____

HOW DID YOU GET THIS ISSUE? ☐ **SUBSCRIPTION** ☐ **NEWSSTAND**

We welcome any and all suggestions you may have, or added nominations for "Unofficial Official" Awards. Feel free to include extra remarks, awards, and more predictions/top 10s on additional sheets of paper. You can also e-mail "Unofficial Officials" to us at pwiqueen@aol.com.

Achievement 2003

the business page

By Harry Burkett

NWA-TNA and Jay Hassman settle lawsuit ... Jerry and Jeff Jarrett were furious back in July 2002 when they claim to have discovered that their marketing consultant, Jay Hassman, had given them incorrect information regarding the number of buys for NWA-TNA pay-per-views during the early weeks of the promotion. According to the Jarretts, Hassman had estimated figures as high as 80,000, but an InDemand executive informed them that the number was closer to 20,000. The Jarretts said they needed 50,000 buys to break even.

Hulk Hogan's assertion that Clear Channel Communications is considering backing a farewell tour for him sounds a bit difficult to believe.

Also, the Jarretts maintained that Hassman had told them that TNA was available in many more homes than really was the case. As it turned out, the NWA-TNA business model had been constructed using faulty numbers. The Jarretts' frustration over Hassman's alleged actions turned to suspicion when they found out that he also worked for Team Services, a consulting firm that handled marketing for WWE events. J Sports & Entertainment, the Jarrett's company, filed suit against Hassman, BTP Consulting (Hassman's firm), and K-4 (the company that Hassman and associate Len Sabal had formed to handle the TNA account).

One year later, as of July 16, the two sides reached a settlement for the case, which had been scheduled for the U.S. District Court for the Middle District of Tennessee on August 30. The parties agreed to a "mutual walk away," dismissing all claims and resulting in no settlement payments to either company.

Whether this was solely the Jarretts' decision to go ahead with the settlement, or done with the urging of TNA's new parent company, Panda Energy, had not been revealed as of press time.

A final farewell? Hulk Hogan made a surprise call to his favorite radio show host, Bubba the Love Sponge, whose program airs in the Tampa area. At first, Hogan wanted to comment on a rap song performed by Randy Savage that ridiculed the "Hulkster" for ignoring his challenge to meet in the ring one more time.

Yet the call might have had an ulterior motive. Bubba revealed that Hogan had been negotiating with Clear Channel Communications for a final farewell tour. Because Clear Channel owns many television and radio stations across the U.S., and

also owns a number of arenas, it would be uniquely suited to promote wrestling events revolving around Hogan. But the events would be one-time engagements, and there's no indication that they would involve into a full-fledged wrestling company.

Bubba asserted that Clear Channel had committed to an eight-figure budget, which, if you're counting, is at least $10-million. Hogan didn't confirm or deny the specific dollar amount, but he said some money had already been placed into an escrow account for the venture.

Will this really come to pass? Hogan has a long history of using Bubba the Love Sponge and other media outlets to air propaganda and gain negotiating leverage with WWE. Even if Hogan does go on a farewell tour, it is hard to believe it would be the last time we would see him in the ring.

Here comes the money ... Although rumors of six- and seven-figure sums are often bandied about during wrestlers' contract negotiations, the salaries of WWE executives don't always become common knowledge. In preparation for its Annual Meeting of Stockholders at the Westin Hotel in Stamford, Connecticut, WWE released information on these salaries in proxies issued to investors.

WWE chairman Vince McMahon's annual salary of $1-million might sound low for a reputed billionaire, but keep in mind that does not include the numerous bonuses he receives as a wrestler and on-air performer. Indeed, the WWE Board of Directors' recent decision to pay dividends should result in the McMahon family receiving approximately $9-million in annual dividends.

Vince's wife, Linda, earns a solid income as CEO, too. She is listed as getting $750,000 per year. WWE Executive Producer Kevin Dunn makes $497,917, and Jim Ross—the vice president of talent relations—earns a salary of $318,333. Way to go, J.R.!

What about Shaniqua? What should a group of community activists do if they have a problem with WWE? They should picket Windy City Wrestling! Well, at least that's what Kathy Morrow and other protesters did on July 31 in Kankakee, Illinois. Morrow and some of her fellow Kankakeeans accused WWE of not doing enough to feature African-American female wrestlers.

So why did Windy City bear the brunt of the protest? *Raw* color commentator Jerry Lawler was featured on the show, but that's just about the only link.

"I should be able to see some of my people in that," said Morrow, an African-American woman who had watched wrestling with her father for over 30 years. Added Morrow: "My dad took me to it all those years. Being a black person, I never saw a black woman wrestler."

Morrow says she has logged complaints with WWE since 1999. "They're saying I'm the only one. I know that's a total lie." Next, she wants the NAACP to scrutinize the company for having what she thinks are too few African-American female wrestlers on the roster.

There was an unusual protest over the supposed lack of African-American women on the WWE roster ... at a Windy City event recently. Maybe the protesters have yet to see Jazz and Jacquelyn (not to mention Shaniqua) in action.

WWE Stockwatch

(For the period of June 16 to July 31, 2003)

45-Day High: 11.07 on June 26 and 27
45-Day Low: 9.06 on July 22
52-Week High: 11.07 on June 26 and 27, 2003
52-Week Low: 6.76 on October 16, 2002

Those who enjoy following the inner workings of WWE will get a thrill out of the company's new policy of posting trend information on television ratings, pay-per-view buy rates, and live event attendance on wwe.com. Of course, this will provide WWE's critics with, potentially, more ammunition, but this openness is more for the benefit of investors.

"[These] are key indicators of our company's performance, and I am pleased to announce that we are now providing this information on our corporate Web site on a weekly basis," said Phil Livingston, WWE's chief financial officer.

WWE has gained more corporate sponsors for the year-long promotion of WrestleMania XX, including Subway Restaurants and Fleer Skybox International. Subway already sponsors the "WrestleMania Recall" spots on WWE programming, and Fleer is producing an exclusive series of WrestleMania XX cards that will be offered as gifts to anyone purchasing WWE pay-per-views between SummerSlam 2003 and WrestleMania XX. As a bonus, there will be a WrestleMania collectible—such as a piece of shirt, chair, ring mat, or other materials—that will be available in one pack out of every 30.

TV breakdown

Week beginning June 23

Raw (TNN): 3.9
Smackdown (UPN): 3.4
Velocity (TNN): 0.8
Confidential (TNN): 0.9
Sunday Night Heat (TNN): 1.0

Analysis: Following his loss to WWE Raw champion Triple-H, Kane was forced to unmask due to a prematch stipulation. Also on this edition of *Raw* from New York's Madison Square Garden, Mick Foley returned to accept the retired hardcore title belt in a special ceremony. *Smackdown* marked the final appearances of Hulk Hogan and Roddy Piper. Hogan, as the masked Mr. America, was pinned in the six-man main event, while Piper teamed with Sean O'Haire and lost to tag team champions Eddie Guerrero and Tajiri.

Week beginning June 30

Raw (TNN): 3.6
Smackdown (UPN): 3.0
Velocity (TNN): 0.9
Confidential (TNN): 0.9
Sunday Night Heat (TNN): 1.0

Analysis: Ratings for the primary shows took hits this week, especially *Smackdown,* because of the Independence Day holiday on Friday. A good sign, however, is that viewers tuned in to the weekend shows to catch up on WWE happenings, because *Velocity* and *Confidential* maintained 0.9 ratings, and *Sunday Night Heat* kept its usual 1.0. Raw champ Triple-H again kept his title against Rob Van Dam, and Shelton Benjamin and Charlie Haas beat Eddie Guerrero and Tajiri for Smackdown tag belts.

Week beginning July 7

Raw (TNN): 4.3
Smackdown (UPN): 3.6
Velocity (TNN): 0.7
Confidential (TNN): 0.7
Sunday Night Heat (TNN): 1.1

Analysis: Both shows rebounded well from the previous week. *Raw* scored a terrific 4.3. The fact that the show was from Montreal was probably a major factor. Since Bret Hart didn't appear, fans had to satisfy themselves with a "Highlight Reel" segment in which Shawn Michaels showed little remorse for the 1997 Survivor Series double-cross. *Smackdown,* from Toronto, was an average show, with Shelton Benjamin, Charlie Haas, and The Big Show beating Smackdown champion Brock Lesnar in a handicap main event.

Week beginning July 14

Raw (TNN): 3.9
Smackdown (UPN): 3.4
Velocity (TNN): 0.9
Confidential (TNN): 0.7
Sunday Night Heat (TNN): 1.1

Analysis: WWE's storylines began to resemble soap operas even more, as *Raw* revolved around the enigmatic Kane, and *Smackdown* focused on Zach Gowen. There was one crucial difference between the two, however. The over-the-top story of Kane being disfigured in a fire had too many holes in it to make much sense. The very real story of Zach Gowen was inspiring, and *Smackdown* viewers responded to that more positively. *Raw* slipped below its desired 4.0 cable rating this week, while *Smackdown* held steady at a 3.4 broadcast rating.

Week beginning July 21

Raw (TNN): 4.2
Smackdown (UPN): 3.4
Velocity (TNN): 0.9
Confidential (TNN): 0.7
Sunday Night Heat (TNN): 0.9

Analysis: The Kane storyline continue to reach low depths. After Kane set Jim Ross on fire the previous week, he gave Linda McMahon a tombstone piledriver on the entrance stage at the end of this show. Bill Goldberg's interruption of Raw champion Triple-H's promo was more compelling. Leading into Vengeance, *Smackdown's* six-man main event ended with The Big Show choke-slamming both champ Brock Lesnar and Kurt Angle. Repeats and otherwise-lackluster profiles are leading to lower *Confidential* numbers this summer.

Week beginning July 28

Raw (TNN): 4.2
Smackdown (UPN): 3.4
Velocity (TNN): 0.8
Confidential (TNN): 0.7
Sunday Night Heat (TNN): 1.0

Analysis: Vince McMahon had a nonchalant attitude toward Kane, despite the fact that "The Big Red Machine" had piledriven his wife the previous week. Shane McMahon, however, resurfaced after a long TV absence and attacked Kane to avenge his mom. New Smackdown champion Kurt Angle teamed with Brock Lesnar to defeat The Big Show and A-Train. A disagreement led to Lesnar giving Angle the F5, and Vinnie Mac announcing a steel cage match between himself and Lesnar the following week.

INSIDE Wrestling BACK ISSUES

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Oct. 1995 (Special Issue): WCW Midyear Report. Also: Randy Savage, Bret & Cactus, Sting, Diesel, Hawk.

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Sept. 1996: She's No Boob! Sunny—More Than Just Sex Appeal! Also: Brian Pillman, 911, Lawler-Jarrett, Alex Wright.

Oct. 1996 (Special Issue): WCW Midyear Report. Also: Jake Roberts, Yokozuna, Giant-Konnan, Ahmed Johnson, Chris Jericho, strutters.

Nov. 1996: The Steiners: Feasting On A Buffet Of Violence. Also: Shawn Michaels, Sabu-Douglas, King of Ring, Eddie Guerrero, truck stop terror.

Dec. 1996: Three Women For Four Horsemen? The Hot Search For A Fourth Filly Has Begun! Also: Sunny & Gunns, Giant, Goldust, Cornette & Hart, Jerry Jarrett.

Holiday 1996 (Special Issue): The Tombstone: Wresling's Deadliest Finisher. Also: 1997 calendar, "Pyscho" Sid, Benoit-Misterio, Steiners-NWO, Pit Bull I, Jushin Liger.

Feb. 1997: Trouble In Egoville: Is There An NWO Within The NWO? Also: Chris Candido, Bret-Shawn, Ric Flair, Joey Styles, Liger-Benoit.

June 1997: Ahmed Johnson Reveals: "I Almost Joined The Nation Of Domination." Also: Mankind, Lex Luger, NWO, Davey Boy Smith, Jerry Graham.

Oct. 1997 (Special Issue): WCW Midyear Report. Also: LOD-PG-13, Rob Van Dam, Flair & Horsemen, Ken Shamrock, McMichael-White, Madd & Mama Maxxine.

Nov. 1997: WWF War Zone: Interfederation Battles Rock The Sport! Also: Ahmed Johnson, Curt Hennig, *Nueva* World Order, Chris Candido, Dan Severn.

Dec. 1997: Losing Is Bull! Has Dennis Rodman Had It With Hulk Hogan? Also: Steve Austin, Jarrett & Debra, Harts, Funk-Francine, Chris Jericho.

Holiday 1997 (Special Issue): The Steiners' Million-Dollar Gamble! Also: 1998 calendar, Alex Wright, The Patriot, Sgt. Slaughter, Turnbuckle Turkey Awards.

Jan. 1998: Our Holiday Wish List For The Stars (Sable). Also: Bret Hart, Rey Misterio Jr., Steve Austin, Roddy Piper, Fritz Von Erich.

Feb. 1998: Wrestling's Top Stars: What's Ahead For '98. Also: Brian Pillman, Sting, Hunter Hearst Helmsley, Reckless Youth.

March 1998: Hart Transplant! The Truth Behind Bret's Defection To WCW. Also: Steve McMichael, Bam Bam Bigelow, Steve Austin, Disco Inferno.

April 1998 (Special Issue): The 1998 INSIDE WRESTLING Computer Tournament. Also: Scott Hall, Marlena, Chris Benoit, Gunn & James, Sabu-Sandman.

May 1998: Is The WWF Screwing Another Hart? Also: Steve Austin, Dallas Page, Booker T, Larry Zbyszko, Al Snow.

June 1998: Exclusive! Steve Austin: The 10 Men Who Inspired His Toughness. Also: Dusty & Dustin, Perry Saturn, Mortis, Jeff Jarrett.

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the steel cage

By Liz Hunter

CHAMBER OF HORRORS. Even when WWE held a press conference announcing that Raw champion Triple-H would be defending his title against Bill Goldberg at SummerSlam 2003, I thought there was still at least a 50 percent chance that the injury-prone Goldberg would not make the match. Little did I know that it would be Triple-H, not Goldberg, who would suffer a groin injury and force a change in the co-main event.

An exchange between Rob Van Dam and Triple-H during the first "Elimination Chamber" match resulted in a pretty serious injury to "The Game," and the match was hardly an instant classic. Liz Hunter had hoped that was the first and last "Chamber" match.

That, in part, is what led to the schmoz (as Bret Hart would call it) on the August 4 edition of *Raw,* when Randy Orton used a steel chair to nail Goldberg during "Da Man's" match against Ric Flair, prompting run-ins by Triple-H, Shawn Michaels, Chris Jericho, and Kevin Nash. Co-General Manager Steve Austin announced he was adding Orton, Jericho, Michaels, and Nash to the no-DQ main event involving Triple-H and Goldberg, and putting all six participants into the dreaded "Elimination Chamber."

I write "dreaded" because I was hoping the chamber had been eliminated after a single use. I know the title of my column is "The Steel Cage," but I am no fan of specialty matches, especially six-way eliminations like this one. At the first "Elimination Chamber" match, which occurred at Survivor Series 2002, Triple-H suffered a crushed larynx when Rob Van Dam leaped from the top of a steel door, and his leg made impact across the Raw champ's throat. These matches increase the risk of injury, and for what benefit? They are usually forgettable in the long run, and almost never have the drama of a one-on-one match. And these gimmick cages are also expensive, usually in the tens, if not hundreds, of thousands of dollars.

Odds are you've already seen SummerSlam, or at least the highlights, at this point. I have a good hunch that you would have rather seen Goldberg vs. Rob Van Dam.

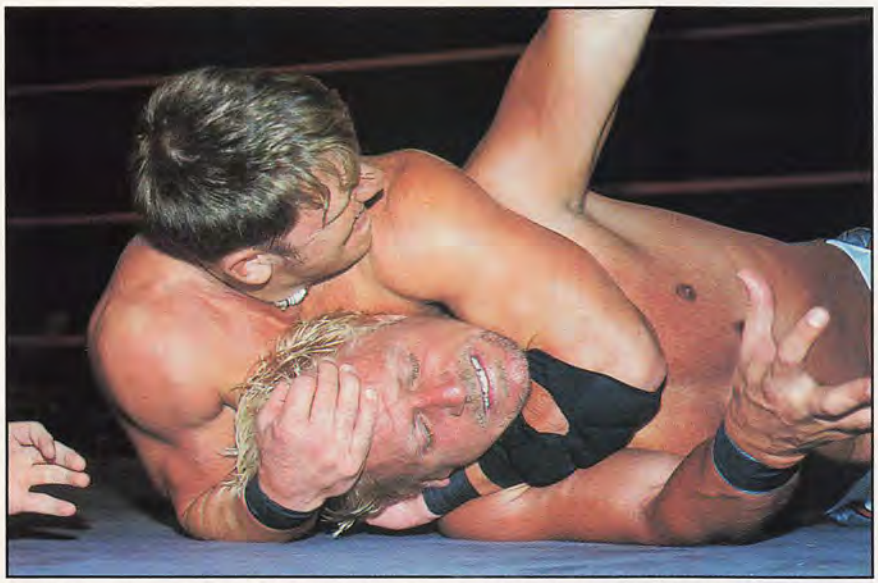
WRESTLING LIKE A CHAMP. Since winning the NWA title from Jeff Jarrett back in June, A.J. Styles has been receiving a lot of criticism for wrestling defensively in his matches. In other words, the critics (also known as the Internet crowd) miss the high spots and are saying that Styles' matches have been boring lately.

No, we're not seeing Styles risking his neck as much with huracanranas and suicide planchas. And why should he? Styles is the NWA champion, and he has nothing to gain by wrestling offensively anymore. "To be the man, you have to beat the man" was more than a catchphrase to Ric Flair. It was an in-ring philosophy.

I thoroughly enjoyed Styles' recent title defenses against Frankie Kazarian and D-Lo Brown. I never thought I'd see D-Lo Brown leap from the top of a ladder inside the ring and send his opponent crashing through a table on the arena floor. Brown might not have had that opportunity to shine if the champ hadn't been wrestling defensively.

Sure, I wish Styles would tell his new stooge, Sonny Siaki, to stop interfering in his matches. But, hey, if I want to see Styles wrestle a clean, high-flying match, I'll go watch him in Ring of Honor.

GRAHAM'S STRANGE REAPPEARANCE. After Superstar Graham and Vince McMahon had a falling-out stemming from the steroid scandal of the early-1990s, there seemed to be close to



To those who say that A.J. Styles has been a bit boring and "defensive" since winning the NWA heavyweight title, Hunter responds that he is just wrestling the way any good champion should.

zero possibility that the two would ever reconcile. About a year ago, however, Graham said he had a friendly conversation with McMahon over the phone. Only a few weeks ago, it was reported that Graham had been invited to attend SummerSlam at America West Arena in his hometown of Phoenix. I, for one, will be glad if Graham can make things right with the company that brought him so much fame.

This reminds me of another kind of comeback that Graham made more than 20 years ago. In the May 1982 issue of *The Wrestler,* we ran a story entitled "The Strange Reappearance Of Superstar Graham." The former WWWF World champion hadn't been seen since his appearance on *Arnold Schwarzenegger's World's Strongest Man* contest, which aired in 1980 on CBS. The most persistent rumors insisted that he had died.

Our editors finally tracked down Graham by phone, and he responded, "Well, I've been competing in bodybuilding contests and generally working on my training methods. You should see me now. I'm stronger than ever! I feel great, and I sure don't feel like I've been dead!"

Added Graham, "[WWF champion Bob] Backlund started those rumors that I was dead as wishful thinking!"

Two decades later, there's no doubt that Graham has seen healthier days. Although Graham is suffering from the degenerative effects of steroid abuse, and is still regaining his strength from a liver transplant he underwent several months ago, he now claims to have "the healthiest liver in wrestling." Obviously, his spirits are as high as ever.

Yes, rumors of Superstar Graham's death have been greatly exaggerated. □

strange list of the month

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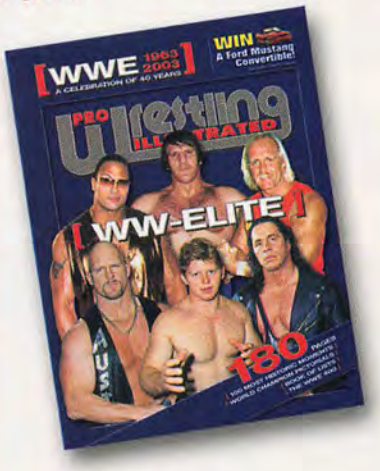

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win, lose, or draw

By Harry Burkett

WITH WWE AND all independent promotions taking severe hits during these hard economic times, Maryland Championship Wrestling seemed to be one of the exceptions. While it became increasingly difficult for MCW to turn Maryland into a wrestling hotbed during the current economic and wrestling recession, its careful attention to its fan base over the years was paying off.

Photos by Timothy A. Walker

There were a lot of emotional moments on the night Maryland Championship Wrestling closed its doors, perhaps none more so than when co-owners Dan "Corporal Punishment" McDevitt and Mark Shrader hugged.

At least in Baltimore and the immediate surrounding areas, people were still coming out to see the shows. In fact, its home arena—Michael's Eighth Avenue in Glen Burnie, Maryland—regularly attracted more than 1,000 fans per event, a rarity for independents these days. Youngsters were still enrolling in MCW's training school, Bonebreakers, in hopes of becoming superstars one day. It looked as if MCW would make it through all right.

That's why local fans were shocked when co-owners Dan McDevitt (also known as Corporal Punishment) and Mark "The Shark" Shrader decided to shut down operations—exactly five years after its launch. For McDevitt and Shrader, it was just a matter of establishing new business priorities and spending more time with their families. Let's face it: Running a wrestling promotion is tough work and very time-consuming. Unless that promotion is raking in loads of cash, it's understandable why it wouldn't be worth the effort anymore—especially when the owners felt as if they had nothing left to prove.

"In life and business, timing is everything," said McDevitt. "We started this company on our own terms, and we're ending it on our own terms … That is what gives me the greatest satisfaction."

On a personal note, I've enjoyed attending at least a dozen MCW shows over the past five years. I liked the idea of a regional promotion flourishing in my home state. It was run like a business, not a fly-by-night con operation or some dude doing it for beer and pizza money on the weekends.

For that reason, I joined approximately 1,100 other fans on July 16 in Glen Burnie, Maryland, for MCW's final show: the fifth annual Shane Shamrock Memorial Cup. The Shamrock Cup usually consists of five qualifying bouts, with the previous year's winner receiving a bye into a six-way

elimination match. This year, however, 1999 winner Christian York, 2000 winner Qenaan Creed, 2001 winner Joey Matthews, and 2002 winner Reckless Youth received automatic byes. Jay Briscoe made the winning pinfall in a special challenge tag team match pitting him and his brother, Mark, against Jose and Joel Maximo (The S.A.T.), thereby earning a spot in the six-way. Crash Holly, just released from WWE, defeated Adam Flash for his spot. The winner would receive the Cup and the unified MCW/MEWF cruiserweight title.

All of those automatic byes made more time for a series of unification matches to merge MCW's championships into those of the Mid-Eastern Wrestling Federation. Although MCW and the MEWF were rivals, McDevitt and Shrader wanted to end the MCW story the right way ... by doing what was best for Maryland wrestling.

None of those matches was conventional, either, as each unification bout was turned into a three-way. The Ghetto Mafia defeated MCW tag team champions Chad Bowman and Dino Divine and MEWF tag champs Buzz Stryker and Derek Wayne. MCW Rage TV champion Doug Delicious beat MEWF Mid-Atlantic champion Bob Starr and Marcus Jordan. MCW heavyweight champion Danny Doring defeated MEWF heavyweight champ Romeo Valentino and Chris Chetti. Long-time favorites such as Headbanger Thrasher, Gillberg, and Van Hammer also competed on the show.

At the end of the night, the six-way elimination match boiled down, appropriately, to the two MVPs of MCW: long-time tag team partners Joey Matthews and Christian York. Wrestlers emerged from backstage and fans were on their feet as York pinned his hated rival. But both men received standing ovations.

And that's how MCW ended an era—on its own terms. □

Appropriately enough, it came down to MCW mainstays Christian York and Joey Matthews in the finals of the final Shane Shamrock Cup ... in the final MCW match ever. York won, and both got a standing ovation.

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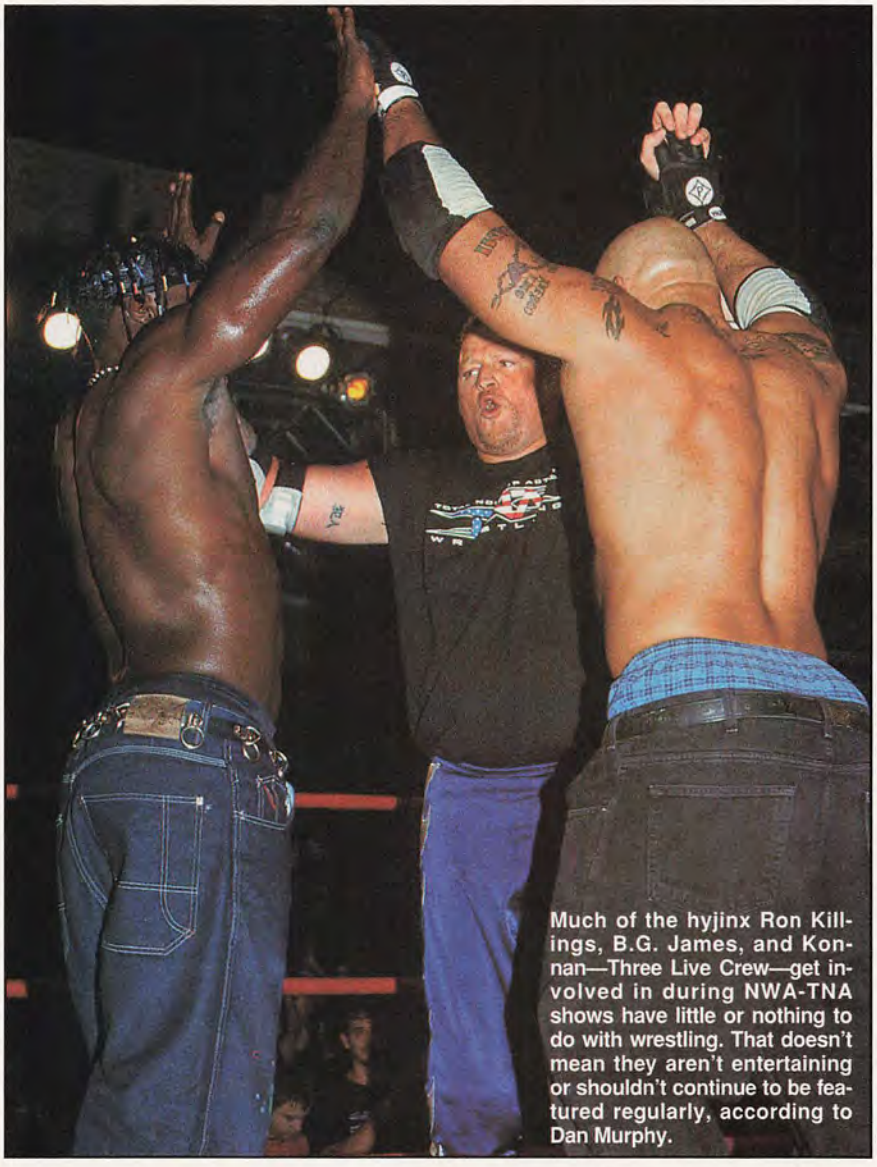
the straight shooter

By Dan Murphy

BEING A COLUMNIST, I get paid to have an opinion. If I had nothing to write, you'd be looking at two blank pages—pages that otherwise might have to be filled with heretofore unpublished photos of Torrie Wilson or Stacy Keibler.

Luckily, I happen to be a somewhat opinionated guy, so the editors of *PWI* never have to resort to using such base filler. However, being passionate about wrestling and being paid to have an opinion, I often feel compelled to lash out and condemn certain storylines or booking maneuvers. As I seek out and dredge up all the inner vitriol I can spew over these two pages, I tend to become somewhat negative overall.



Much of the hyjinx Ron Killings, B.G. James, and Konnan—Three Live Crew—get involved in during NWA-TNA shows have little or nothing to do with wrestling. That doesn't mean they aren't entertaining or shouldn't continue to be featured regularly, according to Dan Murphy.

This month, I'm trying to ease back on the grumpiness and stop the negativity a bit. I'm going to write about something I enjoy ... something fun.

I'm going to write about Three Live Crew. Really.

For those of you not up on your NWA-TNA, 3LC is B.G. James (formerly WWE's Road Dogg), "The Sun-Tanned Superman" Ron Killings, and Konnan (whose new unofficial nickname probably wouldn't be suitable for a family publication). The three former Big Two-ers have formed a pretty formidable clique down in the TNA Asylum, but the thing that has drawn me to them is their shtick.

3LC isn't competing for any title belts. They're not feuding with some other clique for supremacy in TNA. Essentially, they're just screwing around and starring in a slew of goofy skits. In a recent outing, Killings, James, and K-Dawg spoofed the TV news, "reporting" on such current events as the Kobe Bryant rape case and the hunt for Saddam Hussein with ad-libbed one-liners dropped in wherever possible. When James reported on Chicago Cubs manager Dusty Baker's controversial comments on how black and Latino ballplayers perform better than white players in hot, humid weather, James feigned a sudden case of heatstroke as Konnan and Killings offhandedly chatted about the air conditioning being cranked up too high. In another recent segment, Killings and Konnan brought James into the hood, and James got a pimped out makeover to fit in with the locals.

Okay, so it's not *Masterpiece Theater.* Maybe it even sounds a tad offensive and racist. I don't think it is. It's sophomoric and juvenile, but come on: This is pro wrestling we're talking about, after all. James, Killings, and Konnan

James, the former Road Dogg, knows all about injecting a little comedy into a wrestling show. Just as was the case when he was a member of DX, he's known more for his comedic stylings than for his ring skills. And that doesn't bother him.

have an unusual and genuine chemistry together. They seem to enjoy the freedom they've been given in TNA, and the fun they're having on screen makes for some truly entertaining moments for the viewer. As far as I'm concerned, Three Live Crew is one of the best things in NWA-TNA right now.

The kneejerk reaction is to compare 3LC's innuendo-laden, risque shenanigans with the early days of DeGeneration X, especially since James is the common denominator in the two groups. A comparison could be made, yes, but I think it's a stretch. After all, at the end of the day, DX was still all about championships and main events. 3LC is almost an afterthought in TNA. They exist outside the top storylines and feuds (at least for the time being), and they seem perfectly content to just chill there.

A more appropriate comparison might be to ECW's Public Enemy, circa 1995, back when Johnny Grunge and Rocco Rock were getting Mikey Whipwreck drunk out of his gourd or cutting some rambling, Budweiser-fueled promo that never seemed to make a lick of sense. Those segments didn't really drive storylines. Instead, they simply established PE's character and put over two unassuming brawlers who liked to drink beer and goof off in front of the camera.

3LC is a welcome break from Jeff Jarrett's intense feud with (Joe E.) Legend, Raven's intense feud with Shane Douglas, Glenn Gilberti's intense feud with America's Most Wanted, D-Lo Brown's intense feud with Vince Russo ... the list goes on and on. Instead, 3LC seems happy to be the stars of *TNA Xplosion* (TNA's syndicated weekly highlight show, which is comparable to *Sunday Night Heat),* wrestling the indy kids who dream of a long-term gig with TNA.

"I'm having the time of my life here in Nashville," James told me recently. "Do I miss the big paychecks I used to get? Hell yes! Who wouldn't? But the promoters here in the NWA let me, my main man Ronnie K, and the K-Dogg do our thing freestyle. We don't have network suits hanging all over us and always telling us what we can do and what we can't do, what we can say and what we can't say. I don't have a hand working me like a puppet. Right now, 3LC is all about finding ways to entertain, winning when we gotta work, and then finding the after-party, and brother, I wouldn't have it any other way."

Killings also seems content with his current role in the promotion, which is a bit surprising considering he held the NWA title for more than three months in 2002.

"Oh, I'll win that title back again—you can bet all your welfare money on that," Killings said. "There's plenty of time for titles. I'm having a hell of a time teaming with my boys right now, and I can't put a dollar figure on how much fun I'm having. The 'B-Jizzle,' 'K-Diddle,' and 'The Truth' are happy to keep doin' our thang. When we want the shiny belts, we'll take whichever ones we want. We just got other things on our mind right now."

I, for one, am happy to hear it. I'm enjoying the ride. □

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***PWI* Awards:** None

Offense (10.0): Seem like a high number for Jazz? It really isn't, considering her competition in the WWE women's division. Jazz isn't as muscular as Chyna was during her peak, but she is far more aggressive. Ever hear the expression, "If looks could kill"? They were talking about Jazz. She blends intimidation and physicality like no one else. And she has a daunting repertoire.

Defense (8.5): This explains why Jazz has suffered so many upsets, especially to Trish Stratus, during her WWE career. Very few wrestlers can channel their aggression into a productive defensive game, with Chris Benoit being the most prominent exception. Women's champion Molly Holly is best able to exploit this weakness.

Experience (8.5): Unfortunately, Jazz has spent a lot of time on the disabled list during her brief career. She has wrestled a good number of matches in WWE, however, and that counts for a lot. Her ECW stint wasn't that helpful because she had no competent female opponents. Jazz' time on the Louisiana and Texas indy circuit was more beneficial.

Conditioning (10.0): When compared to her WWE rivals, Jazz is in fabulous shape. The other divas are more concerned with eating lean salads and maintaining trim figures suitable for *Playboy* spreads. Just looking at Jazz, you know this girl consumes protein. She has a physique worthy of a bodybuilder, not an excessively implanted aerobics instructor. And she ought to be proud of that body.

Science (9.0): While Jazz is only average when it comes to chain wrestling, she's a good submission wrestler. Her double-chicken wing and STF, along with her half- and full Boston crabs, are very effective. Considering her power and brawling tactics, she would be reminiscent of Lex Luger, *if* he had really listened intently to his original trainer, Hiro Matsuda.

Stamina (9.5): She would be a favorite to win any female "Iron-man" match, whether it lasted 30 or 60 minutes. This is probably because she has been a competitive athlete all her life, including an outstanding basketball player in high school. Jazz has confidence that she can go the distance, and that's as important as her cardiovascular training.

Power (10.0): Jazz is undoubtedly the strongest female in WWE today. Judging by how Joanie Laurer has slimmed down her physique, and considering that Nicole Bass is only semi-active in 2003, Jazz might just be the most powerful female wrestler in the United States. She bodyslams opponents with ease, and her powerslam is the perfect illustration of her strength and speed.

Speed (9.0): Compared to Jazz, Trish Stratus and Victoria are more flexible competitors. In fact, Stratus' speed is her best weapon against Jazz. Considering her athletic ability and impressive endurance, one would think Jazz would be a bit quicker, but, unfortunately, a bad knee tends to slow her down after five minutes.

Ability To Absorb Punishment (10.0): Jazz doesn't absorb much punishment in singles matches because her opponents wisely play cat-and-mouse games with her, aimed toward keeping her off-balance for pinning predicaments. Nevertheless, she's vulnerable in three- and four-way bouts because her foes—again, wisely—tend to double- and triple-team her.

Quality Of Opposition (10.0): With ladies' competition at a low point in Japan, there is no better place for a female to wrestle than on Raw, home of the women's championship. Still, Jazz did have better competition when, in the early days of the brand extension in 2002, she defended the women's title on both Raw *and* Smackdown cards.

① **Jazz isn't the kind of female wrestler who pulls opponents' hair because she isn't capable of doing much more. Hardly! She does it because she works herself into such a rage that she can't help but attack her foe with ruthless aggression. That can be a strength and a weakness.**

Repertoire: Jazz doesn't have a very broad repertoire, but she possesses quite a few very effective moves and holds, and knows exactly how and when to execute them. She rarely goes for the STF, for example, unless she has already applied the half-Boston crab to weaken her opponent's leg. She also uses many typically "male" maneuvers, such as the shoulder-breaker. Yes, this female does a lot more than the hair-mare. Her fisherman's suplex can be devastating.

Strengths: She certainly isn't your cookie-cutter WWE diva. Jazz came up the ranks the hard way, rising to prominence by getting in the faces of guys like Steve Corino and Joel Gertner. ECW divas ran in the other direction, especially Dawn Marie, who must consider herself lucky to be a Smackdown diva now. As a result, she has a credibility—along with street-smart instincts—to distinguish her from the rest of the Raw beauties.

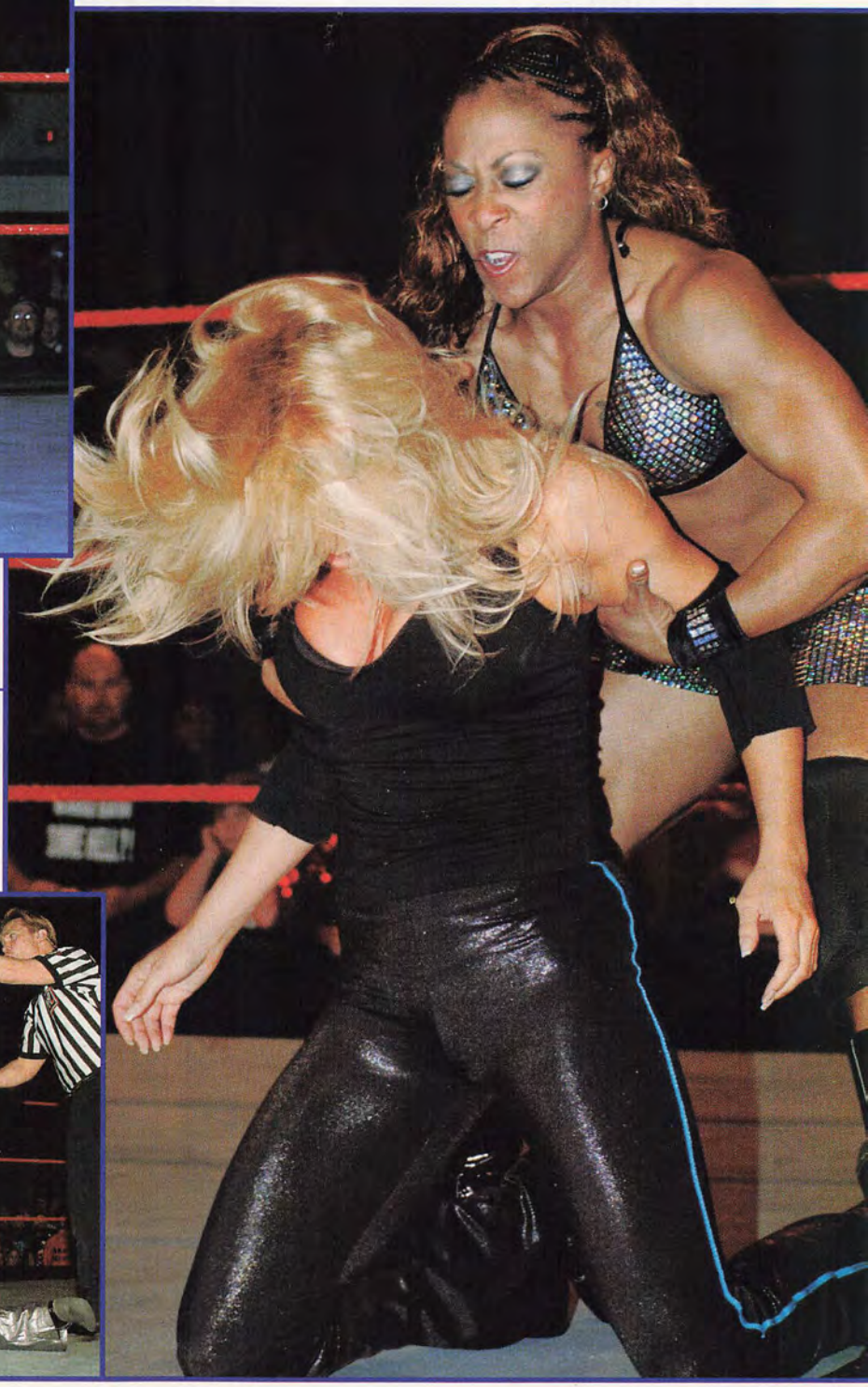
Weaknesses: Jazz blew out her knee while on tour of the U.K. in the spring of 2002. It happened when she and Molly Holly were battling Trish Stratus and Jacquelyn in a tag team match in London. She initially injured that knee during a basketball game in high school. When the women's champ returned to the U.S., she underwent an MRI that revealed a complete tear in her ACL. After dropping the women's title, she missed the rest of the year.

Defining Career Moment: The New Orleans native gritted through the toughest match of her life when she braced that same knee to defend the women's title against Trish Stratus in her hometown of Toronto on May 13, 2002. With those kinds of odds against her, Jazz knew she was going down that night. That losing effort proved more about Jazz' guts and determination than any match she has actually won.

Future: Jazz has been on the sidelines as of late, suffering from a nagging shoulder injury. While she is expected to recover fairly quickly, let's hope for her sake this doesn't become a trend. She's a good fit in Theodore Long's group, which includes her husband, Rodney Mack. Having a manager, even a disreputable one like Long, enhances Jazz' reputation as an impact player. And she's wise to hang around Long rather than that flaky Steven Richards.

② **Jazz has mastered basic holds such as the half-Boston crab and more complex ones that require her to be a bit more flexible on the mat. And she doesn't rely on one devastating hold or move to win every match.**

③ Even though she has a relatively compact 5'4" frame, Jazz packs enough power to push around Jacquelyn and the rest of the divas on the Raw roster.



It'd be easy to make a case that Jazz wrestles best when she's very, very angry. And no one in WWE has made her more angry over the last year than Trish Stratus. If Jazz can stay healthy, we'll see some more chapters of this feud. ④

The Fabulous Freebirds vs. The Von Erichs

Data Sheet

Title At Stake World Class Championship Wrestling six-man tag team
Referees David Manning (in the ring), Bronco Lubich (outside the ring)
Date May 6, 1984
Event David Von Erich Memorial Parade of Champions
Site Texas Stadium, Irving, Texas

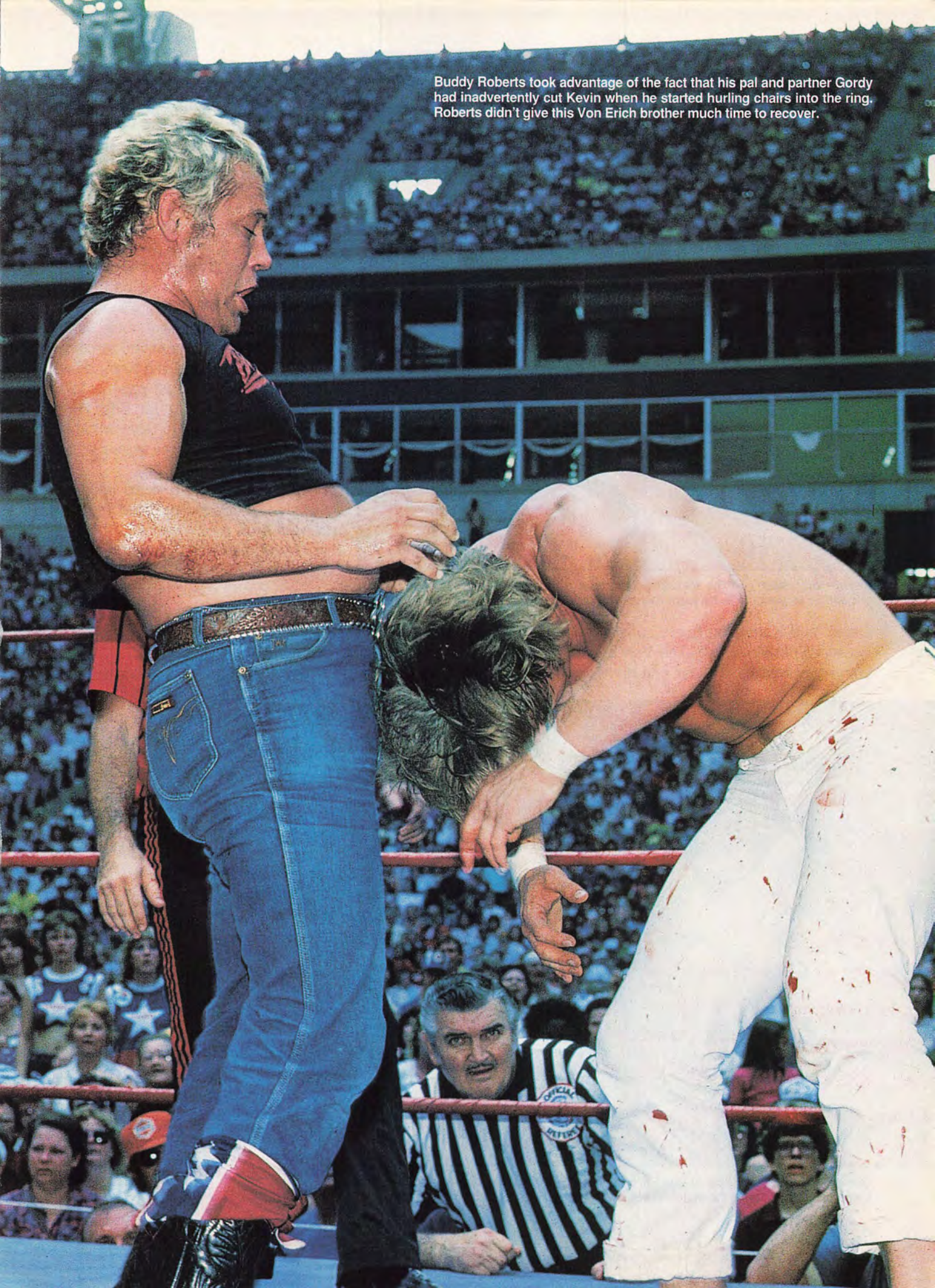
Synopsis

The war between The Fabulous Freebirds and the Von Erich family was so huge that it took the cavernous Texas Stadium to contain it.

The Freebirds and Von Erichs were diametrically opposed in just about every way possible—except one. Both teams were comprised of proud Southerners. But their definitions of Southern hospitality were drastically different.

Led by the arrogant Michael Hayes, The Freebirds (Hayes, Buddy Roberts, and Terry "Bamm Bamm" Gordy) invaded the Dallas-based World Class Championship Wrestling in 1982. The Jack Daniel's-swilling redneck roughnecks immediately clashed with Kevin,

The Freebirds had their way with the Von Erichs at times early in the bout, as the huge, rugged Terry Gordy tossed around Kevin with relative ease.



Buddy Roberts took advantage of the fact that his pal and partner Gordy had inadvertently cut Kevin when he started hurling chairs into the ring. Roberts didn't give this Von Erich brother much time to recover.

Kevin would later end the match for his team with a beautiful flying bodypress, but earlier in the match, he went flying without choosing to do so.

David, and Kerry Von Erich, sons of promoter/former wrestler Fritz Von Erich. The Von Erichs took pride in competing with both honor and humility, whereas The Freebirds took delight in torturing opponents, infuriating fans, and boasting about just how great they were.

For years, the Freebird-Von Erich rivalry was the hottest in the Lone Star State. The Parade of Champions supercard was to be the culmination of the feud, pitting The Freebirds against Kevin, Kerry, and younger brother Mike Von Erich. But tragedy struck weeks before the event, when David Von Erich died while touring Japan. David had been scheduled to face Ric Flair for the NWA World title in the main event of the card, and the family was determined to compete in his honor. Kevin and Kerry drew straws to see who would get the title spot, and Kerry won. Fritz Von Erich then came out of retirement to team with his sons in this epic battle against their arch-rivals.

The Freebirds strutted to the ring first in this six-man "Badstreet Brawl." Hayes preened and moonwalked, while Gordy and Roberts paced like anxious prize fighters. When Kevin Von Erich's music hit, the 30,000-plus fans in attendance erupted, their cheers echoing throughout the massive stadium. The Freebirds bailed out of the ring when the Von Erichs entered, and Gordy began flinging steel chairs at the Von Erichs inside the ropes.

Gordy did a lot of pounding of Von Erich flesh as the match progressed. The Von Erich patriarch would change the match's momentum when he entered the ring, though.

Kevin blocked one of the chairs as it sailed toward Fritz' head, opening a cut on his finger, and he smeared the blood on the side of his white jeans.

Mike Von Erich started the match against the veteran Roberts and attempted to outwrestle "Buddy Jack" by focusing on his left knee. Mike acquitted himself well, but he was no match for the wily Roberts, who brawled back with punches and kicks. Kevin saved Mike from the huge Gordy and battered the biggest Freebird with quick dropkicks and punches. With the 'Birds reeling and the fans loudly chanting, "Von Er-ich!" Hayes decided it was time to play dirty: He took off his leather cowboy boot and repeatedly

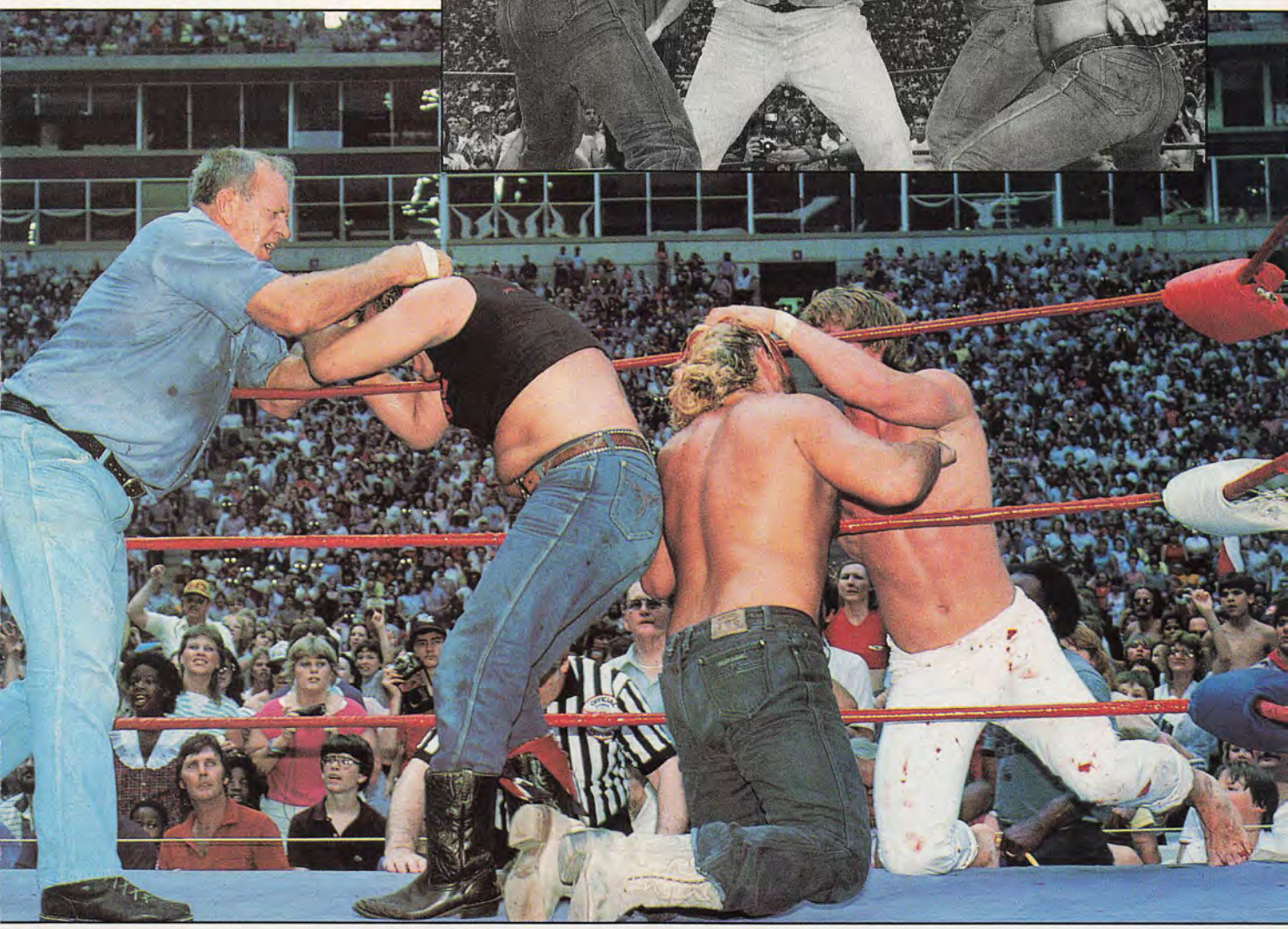
smashed it over Kevin's head. Fritz had had enough, and the Von Erich patriarch delighted the fans by blasting Hayes with a series of taped right hands.

Shortly after the 10-minute mark, all six men were in the ring battering one another with boots, punches, and kicks. Fritz locked Hayes in his famous iron clawhold and caught a glimpse of Gordy charging him from the side. Fritz reacted quickly and clamped a claw on Gordy as well, holding two of the three Freebirds immobile. As Roberts wheeled to find his comrades, Kevin scampered to the top rope and executed a beautiful flying body-press, driving Roberts to the mat. Referee Referee David Manning made the three-count, and the Von Erichs stood victorious.

The Von Erich family's triumph (which netted them the WCCW six-man title) became complete later in the card when Kerry caught Flair in a backslide to win the NWA World title.

Tragically, the Von Erich family would self-destruct in the coming years. Mike committed suicide in 1987. Youngest brother Chris would commit suicide in 1991. And Kerry would kill himself two years later. Fritz died in 1997, following a painful divorce from his wife, Doris. The only surviving brother is Kevin.

But on this one day, the Von Erich family stood tall, and the state of Texas—and the wrestling world—cheered their every move. □



Even though there were two referees assigned to the bout, there was no way they could maintain control when Fritz' temper got the best of him (below). There were iron clawholds for just about everyone (right) once Fritz and his boys got ready to send those Freebirds on their way.

PRO Wrestling ILLUSTRATED

the ultimate wrestler

Can you name the 7 wrestlers that make up the ultimate wrestler?
Answers will appear in the January 2004 issue of *PWI*.

1. HAIR
2. FACE
3. LEFT ARM
4. RIGHT ARM
5. SHIRT
6. WRAP

[Key to October's Ultimate Wrestler]

Hair/Face: Raven
Mask: Vader
Necklace: Rikishi
Right Arm: Kid Kash
Left Arm: Kane
Torso: Glacier
Trunks/Legs: Spanky
Boots: Hulk Hogan

You're at the airport. You see your favorite wrestler relaxing in one of the terminals. You rush up to him or her as questions fill your excited mind. There are certain things you just *have* to know about this person. Well, these are the 12 questions you'd *never* think of asking

12 questions

C.M. PUNK

Who do you find more attractive, Wonder Woman or Rouge from *X-Men?*

Wonder Woman, hands down. Lynda Carter would kick Rouge's ass!

Do you have any advice for the lovelorn Smithers in his quest to gain the adoration of his beloved Mr. Burns on *The Simpsons?*

Smithers needs to do something extraordinary in his presence and then retreat. It'll make Mr. Burns realize how much he loves Smithers. It's the only way to get Mr. Burns to notice him. Mr. Burns has to want something that he can't have.

Why do you bleed so much?

It's a natural thing. It's menstrual. It's also why I'm in a bad mood and cut such mean promos.

What's the worst thing about wrestling Raven everywhere?

Jazz hands. Please don't ask me to explain.

What's the most disgusting beverage you've ever tasted?

Chicken-flavored soda in Ireland. I think it was soup.

What do you say to people who question the straight-edge lifestyle you embrace?

Since they're normally fans who have paid to see me wrestle, I make their girlfriends buy me things.

You have a choice between President Bush, Courtney Love, and Jim Hellwig to live with on a deserted island for the rest of your life. Which would you choose and why?

I would choose President Bush and remind him constantly that he's just a governor, because he never won the presidential election in the first place.

All of your tattoos have a meaning. Which one means the most to you and why?

The tattoo of my dog's paw. Callee was the best dog ever.

What's your favorite punk band?

The only band that ever mattered, The Clash.

Who was the first person you told that you were going to be a wrestler, and what was that person's reaction?

Christopher Daniels. He told me to get into stunt work because stunt work is more lucrative.

What's the longest you've gone without food?

Most recently, I went to a Cubs game. It was supposed to be quick. It was clear skies before we left. We got there and it started raining, and there ended up being three delays. I didn't bring a protein bar with me and wouldn't eat a hot dog. It was six hours of pure agony. I finally ate a hot dog, and that sent me on a downward spiral of chocolate and crap for the rest of the day.

You have a hammer, a midget, and a roulette wheel. What are your plans for the evening?

I'd figure out an intricate way to murder Colt Cabana and pin it on the midget. *[Editor's note: Don't worry ... he's kidding.]* □

STRAIGHT EDGE

fantastic finishers

Asai Moonsault

You might also hear it being called: lionsault, quebrada, second-rope moonsault

Where you might have seen it: This move is a staple of WWE superstar Chris Jericho's repertoire and has served as his finisher on occasion. The move, however, is most closely associated with a new addition to the WWE roster, Ultimo Dragon, the man credited with its invention. Rey Misterio Jr., Tajiri, and Shannon Moore are three other WWE stars that have used the move in the past. The move is also routinely executed by the Great Sasuke, Masao Orihara, Heat, and a host of other Japanese junior heavyweights. In Mexico, the Asai moonsault is a hallmark of men like Lizmark Jr., Volador, Ricky Marvin, and others. Elsewhere, talented flyers like Jody Fleisch, Christopher Daniels, and Jardi Frantz make this challenging move look easy. The in-ring variation is just as widely used as the more risky out-of-the-ring version. The Asai moonsault is infamous in Japan because of its role in ending the in-ring career of high-flyer Hayabusa. In the final days of the FMW promotion, a slight miscalculation on Hayabusa's part as he executed the Asai moonsault caused him to land on the crown of his head, leaving him paralyzed. To this day, Hayabusa is largely confined to a wheelchair.

The front view of Chris Jericho's lionsault (a.k.a. Asai moonsault), executed against Konnan ...

The scoop: Before he became Ultimo Dragon, Yoshihiro Asai was struggling to make an impact on the wrestling scene. His 1990 feud with Mexican legend Negro Casas earned him some fame, but it was his invention of a move that would eventually bear his name that left the biggest impression. Asai's moonsault variation, which he performs against a standing opponent, became wildly popular all over the globe, both as a suicide dive and an in-ring impact move. It remains a part of his arsenal to this day. Like Dragon, Sasuke and Reckless Youth also use the move against standing opponents. Others, most notably Jericho and the now-retired Hayabusa, varied the move slightly by using it against an opponent who was flat on his back in mid-ring. The move is popular not just among male cruiserweights, but among women wrestlers, agile heavyweights, and even minis. For some time, the diminutive Mascarita Sagrada was thought to have the most breathtaking execution of this daredevil move. Variations have included the top-rope (springboard) version, and a twisting version that ends like a senton (back-first) on an opponent.

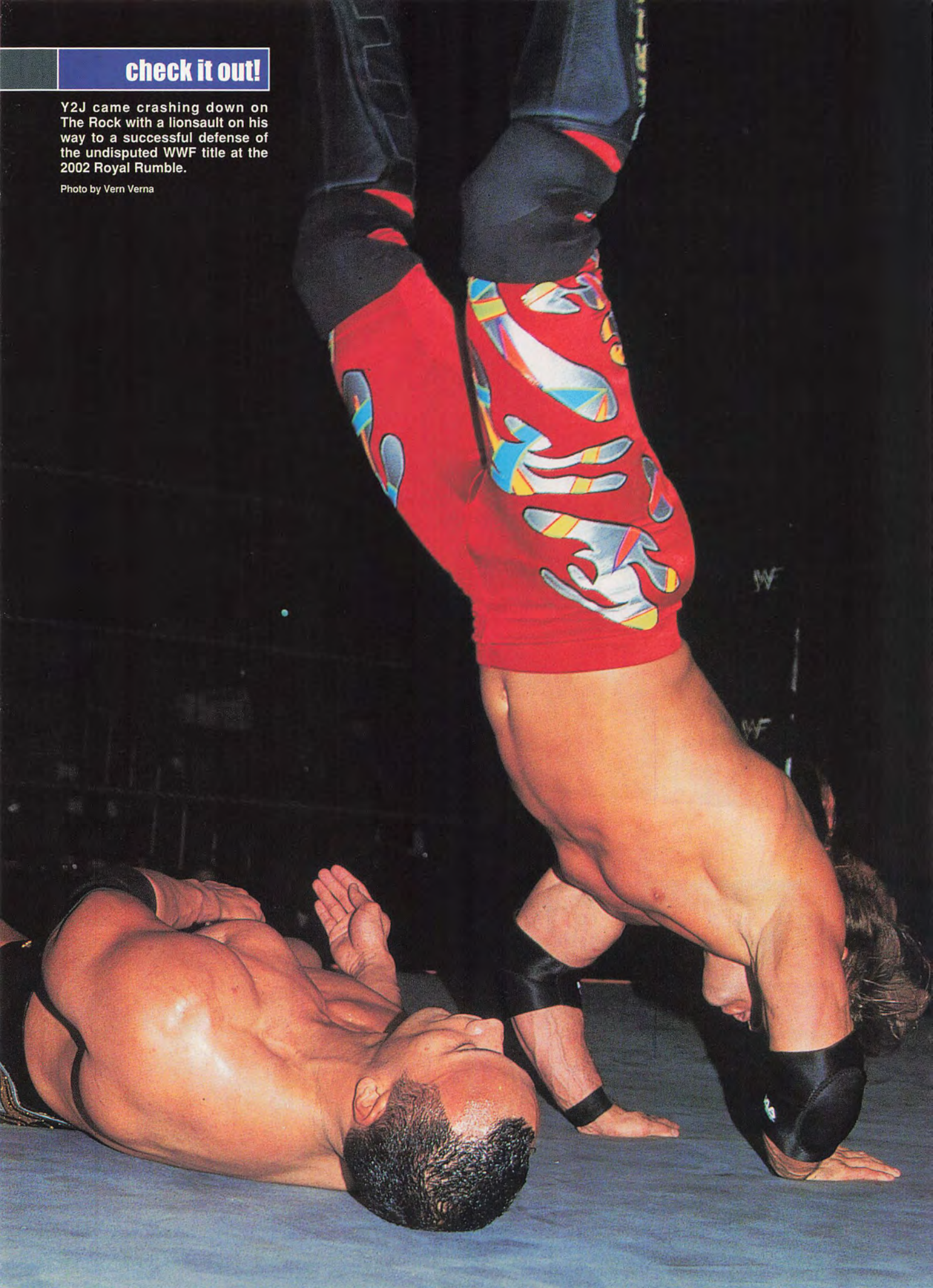
How it's done: Simple but effective, the in-ring Asai moonsault usually begins with a running start. A wrestler, usually chased by a standing opponent or in line with a fallen opponent, will leap onto the middle rope and execute a moonsault by arching his back and flipping over backward. A standing opponent is typically knocked flat by the move, while an opponent on the mat is the victim of the press, and a pinning predicament. When executed from the apron to the floor, the Asai moonsault allows little room to pick up momentum, and very little room for error. One of the better examples of this was seen in the match between Dean Malenko and Rey Misterio Jr. on the July 8, 1996, edition of *WCW Monday Nitro,* where poor aim saw Misterio totally miss Malenko and smack the ground. □

... and the back view of the same move used to stymie Disco Inferno.

check it out!

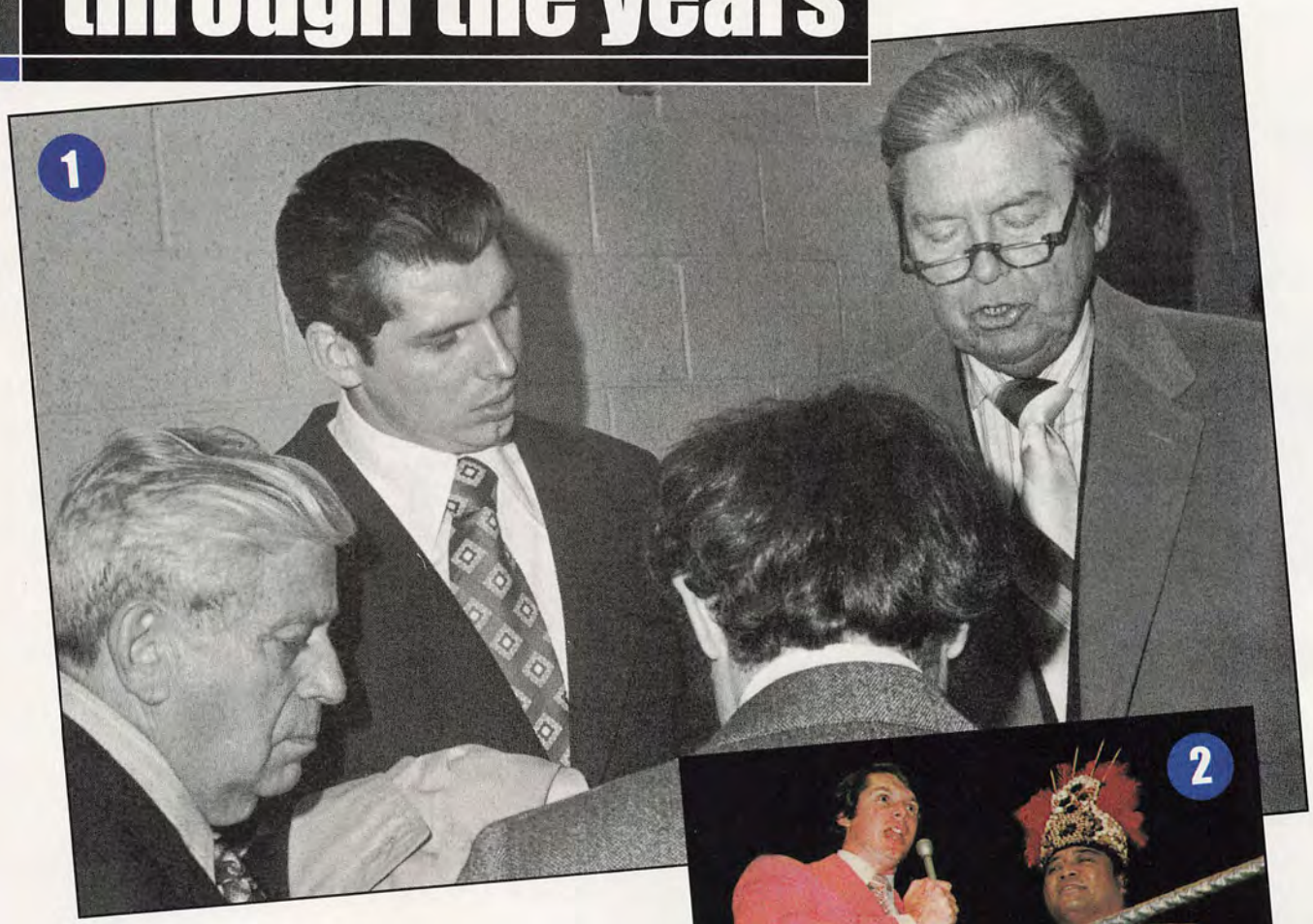
Y2J came crashing down on The Rock with a lionsault on his way to a successful defense of the undisputed WWF title at the 2002 Royal Rumble.

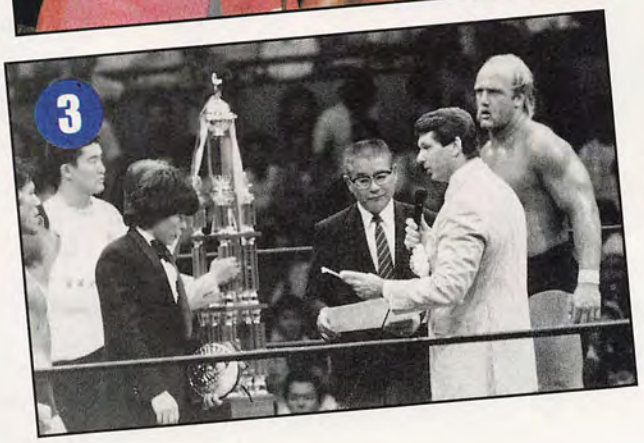
Photo by Vern Verna



It's amazing how drastically certain superstars change their looks over the years. A change in hair color or hairstyle here, a new ring outfit there, a few more tattoos here and there, or the mother of all changes ... the total gimmick overhaul. Every month, *PWI* will show you just how much one of your favorites has transformed himself. Yeah, it really is the same person in all these photos!

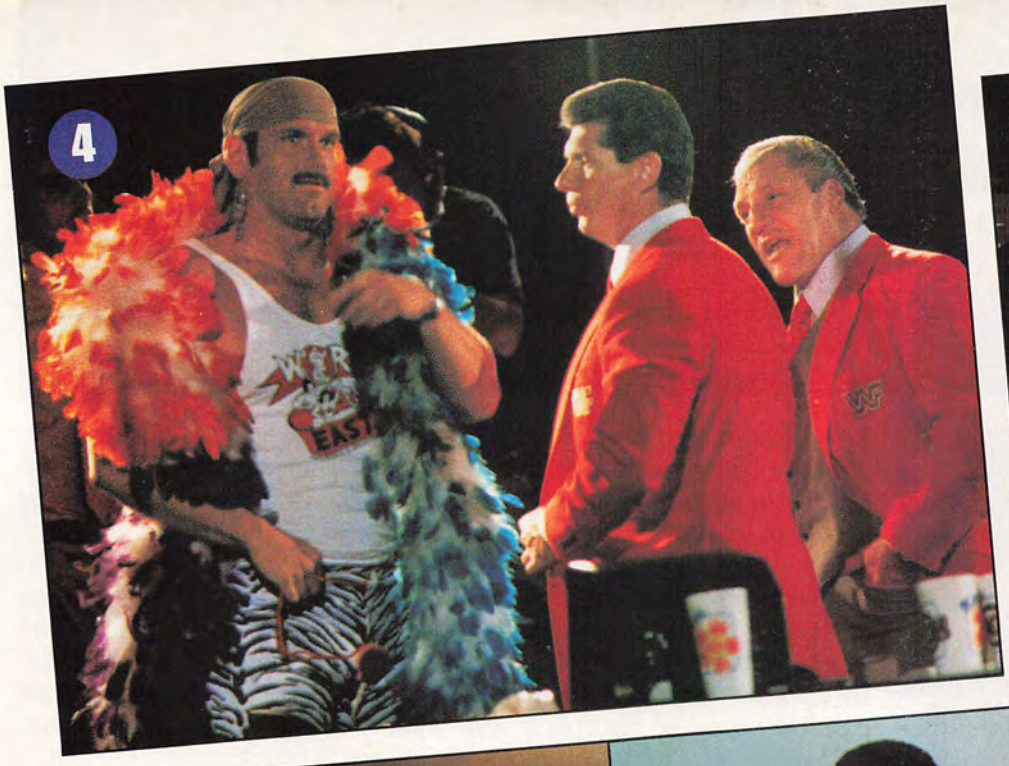
through the years





THE VINCE McMAHON FILES

1—With WWWF President Willie Gilzenberg (left) and Vince Sr. (1972)
2—Chatting up Peter Maivia, The Rock's grandpa (1977)
3—Accompanying Hulk Hogan to Japan (1983)
4—With fellow broadcasters Ventura and Sammartino (1986)
5—The jury found him not guilty (1994)
6—The studious look ... alongside Mike Tyson (1998)
7—In retrospect, a really bad idea (2000)
8—After Hogan got through with him (2003)



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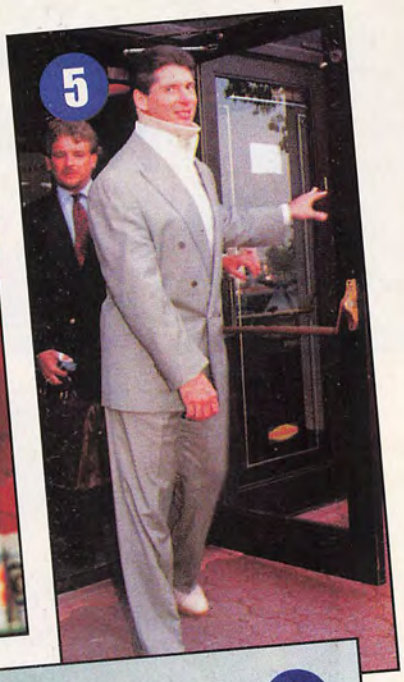

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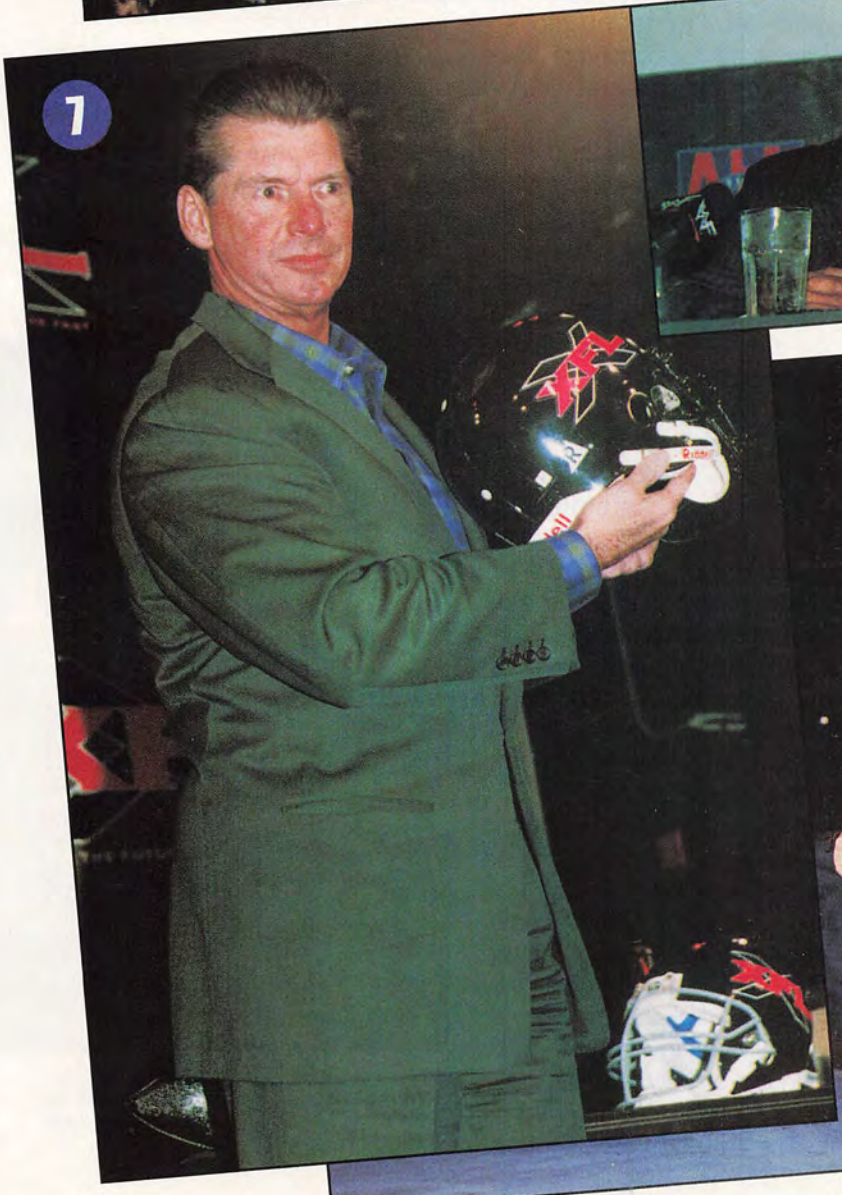
Vince McMahon



7

8

the wrestling observer

hall of fame

In each issue, *PWI* will honor one member of the *Wrestling Observer* Hall of Fame, which we recognize as the sport's official Hall of Fame

BIG VAN VADER

BIG VAN VADER proved to be the most dominant force in WCW through the early-1990s, and forever changed the expectations of what a big man could—and could *not*—do in the ring.

The man called Vader was born Leon White on May 14, 1957. He attended the University of Colorado on a football scholarship and made the All Big 8 Team in 1979. His flirtations with the NFL were curtailed by injuries, prompting him to pursue a career off the gridiron.

White was trained by Brad Rheingans and made his pro wrestling debut in 1985 in the AWA as "Bull Power" Leon White. But even at 6'5", 360 pounds, "Bull Power" was no match for then-champion Stan Hansen. White moved on to Austria's Catch Wrestling Association, where he scored a major upset over former AWA champ Otto Wanz to win the CWA title.

Following his tour of Austria, White signed with New Japan and changed his ring name to Big Van Vader. He adopted a mask and extravagant smoking headgear to reinvent himself as an American monster. In 1988, Vader reached the finals of the IWGP title tournament before falling to Tatsumi Fujinami. By then, he was a sensation in Japan. He peppered opponents with stiff, quick jabs to set up moves, rather than rely just on brute force like so many other super heavyweights.

On April 24, 1989, Vader defeated Salman Hashimikov for the vacant IWGP title. After losing the belt to Hashimikov, he returned to the CWA and regained the CWA title. Vader spent the rest of 1989 and part of 1990 winning and losing major championships in Austria, Japan, and Mexico.

The big bruiser made his WCW debut on July 7, 1990, destroying Tom Zenk. Vader wrestled for WCW on a part-time basis before heading back to Japan. He regained the IWGP title in January 1991 and finally dropped the CWA title in July. He would later team with Bam Bam Bigelow to win the IWGP tag title.

In early-1992, Vader returned to WCW, this time for a full-time run, with eight-time NWA World champ Harley Race as his manager. He gained notoriety by breaking Joe Thurman's back with a power bomb, and signed to face Sting for the World title. Surprisingly, Vader handled the beloved champion with relative ease, winning his first WCW championship on July 12, 1992.

American fans were stunned by Vader. The 450-pounder's moonsault was as graceful as it was devastating, and his brutality was scary. Ron Simmons scored a major upset over him for the title on August 2, 1992, but Vader recaptured the gold on December 30. He held the title for almost all of 1993, making him the most durable heel world champion since Ric Flair. But unlike Flair, Vader rarely needed outside interference to beat foes.

Vader finally lost the WCW title on December 27, 1993, to Flair. Following the loss, Vader feuded with Cactus Jack and Ray Traylor before winning the U.S. title in December 1994. However, Vader was stripped of that championship for "multiple violent offenses." A feud with Hulk Hogan for the World title

Vader was intimidating enough in standard tights, but the unusual mask he wore early in his career made him look downright scary!

was a disaster, and Vader left WCW in August 1995.

Vader signed with the WWF and debuted at the 1996 Royal Rumble. He re-established himself as a heel by attacking Gorilla Monsoon and instigating a feud with champion Shawn Michaels. However, he was unable to take the title. He scored a win over The Undertaker at the 1997 Rumble, and feuded with Yokozuna, Bret Hart, Goldust, and Kane before leaving for Japan again in 1998.

On March 6, 1999, Vader pinned Akira Taue to win the All-Japan Triple Crown. A month later, he beat Kenta Kobashi to win the 1999 Champions Carnival. He bounced back from a career-threatening arm injury and won the GHC tag title with 2 Cold Scorpio in 2001. He last appeared in the U.S. on the February 19 NWA-TNA pay-per-view.

Vader remains one of the top American draws in Japan and will be remembered for, among other things, winning major championships in four countries (Mexico, Japan, Austria, and the U.S.) on three continents. He set new standards for super heavyweights everywhere. □

The big man from Colorado was versatile enough to use the scorpion deathlock, Sting's pet finisher, against him during their epic feud.

Although Vader never won a title in the WWF, he did pick up some impressive wins, including a few against the mighty Undertaker.

Once his WWF career ended, Vader returned to Japan and celebrated an All-Japan Triple Crown win with a beverage of his choice in March 1999.

independent roundup

By Liz Hunter

AN UNEXPECTEDLY LARGE crowd of more than 1,200 Ring of Honor fans (a record for the promotion) crammed into the Rexplex in Elizabeth, New Jersey, on July 19 to witness **Jeff Hardy's** return to the ring and the final independent match of Ring of Honor favorite **Paul London**. The lowlight of the night was the decidedly negative reception that Hardy received *(for more on that, turn to page 36)*. Those same fans were wholeheartedly behind London for his final match against ROH champion **Samoa Joe**. Despite losing to Samoa Joe by chokeout, London recovered enough to vocalize his emotions in a heartfelt speech after the match. London recently signed a developmental contract with WWE and was scheduled to report to Ohio Valley Wrestling shortly after press time.

Also on the card, **Low-Ki** made his triumphant return after a collarbone injury, disrupting **Special K's** in-ring rave. **Deranged** made the mistake of being the last Special K member in the ring and was obliterated by Ki.

"Sick" Nick Mondo certainly lived up to his nickname by winning this year's Tournament of Death for Combat Zone Wrestling. The one-day event featured some of the most brutal matches ever witnessed. Each specialty death match featured a unique use of macabre materials, including panes of glass, assorted weapons that fans brought, boards covered with barbed wire, and the American garbage match standard, light tubes. Mondo outlasted **J.C. Bailey** in a light tubes match in the opening round. Mondo then turned back the challenge of CZW owner **Zandig** in a best-of-three-falls "Log Cabin" death match in which light tubes were used to construct log cabins at ringside. The final bout saw Mondo defeat American hardcore legend **Ian Rotten** in a 200 light tube/barbed-wire rope match to win the tournament. While this is a far cry from the catch-as-catch-can style employed by most pro wrestlers, the fact that Nick Mondo could sustain such brutality and walk away from this tournament is amazing.

Former **Three Minute Warning** member **Jamal** has resurfaced in Major League Wrestling and is now a member of **The Samoan Island Tribe** with **Mana** and **Samu** ... In other Samoan news, **"Samoan Storm" Afa Jr.** has relinquished the World Xtreme Wrestling heavyweight title, declaring it vacant. Afa Jr. will be attending the University of Pittsburgh this fall, where he will play college football ... **Lil' Cholo** won WPW's Best of the West Tournament on July 18 at the Anaheim Marketplace. Cholo defeated **Super Dragon**, **Scott Lost**, and **B-Boy** in the four-way main event.

Maryland Championship Wrestling held its final card on July 16, presenting the final **Shane Shamrock** Memorial Tournament. Several big names from the past wrestled on the show, including **Crash Holly**, **Van Hammer**, **Gillberg**, **Headbanger Thrasher**, and **Chris Chetti**. **Christian York** outlasted Crash Holly, **Reckless Youth**, **Qenaan Creed**, **Jay Briscoe**, and his own tag team partner, **Joey Matthews**, to win the Shamrock Cup. The MCW titles were all unified with the Mid-Eastern Wrestling Federation championships, and many of the MCW regulars will now compete for the MEWF.

New KYDA Pro Wrestling Com-

Paul London shows his gratitude to Ring of Honor champion Samoa Joe after their hard-fought battle on July 19 in Elizabeth, New Jersey. London may have lost his bid for the ROH title, but he now has something even better—a WWE contract.

missioner **Pat Lawson** assumed his duties at the July 19 show in Elkton, Virginia. His first order of business was to strip **Snatch Haggis** of the heavyweight title and **Spencer Christian** of the Mid-Atlantic title ... **Eric Logan** won New Mid West Wrestling's **Alexis Homier** Memorial Tournament on July 26. He pinned **Dredd Walker** in the finals ... Carolinas mainstay **Marc Ash** is out of action with a possible tear to his Achilles tendon ... Mega Championship Wrestling competitor **Adam Cage** wasn't a happy camper after losing a match to U.S. champion **J-Rocc**, and not because he didn't win the title. The stipulations for the match stated that the loser had to wear a chicken mask. No world on whether or not that decision ruffled his feathers.

Quick title changes: Central Wrestling Alliance, July 27: **Larry D** defeated **Jed T. Lungini** to win the heavyweight title ... ***New Era Pro Wrestling, July 26:*** **Simply Marvelous** defeated **XXX-plicit Content** to become the tag team champions ... **Cru Jones** defeated **Brad Anderson** to become the U.S. champion ... **D-Lo Brown** defeated **Johnny Rayz** to become the heavyweight champion ... ***Independent Wrestling Revolution, July 26:*** **Breyer Wellington** defeated **Jimmy Jacobs** to win the King of the Independents title ... ***New Midwest Wrestling, July 26:*** **The New Church of RON** defeated **Sage Ramsey** and **Jason Wells** to win the tag title ... ***Allied Independent Wrestling Federation, July 26:*** **Creeping Death** and **Brian Danzig** beat AIWF tag team champions **Baine** and **Ashe** for the belts... ***Premiere Wrestling Alliance, July 26:*** **Shane Williams** pinned **Jason Maxx** to win the ironman title ... **Team Old School** won a three-way dance against **Pretty Evil**, and **Tim Baldwin** and **Thorne** to win the tag title ... ***Insane Wrestling Federation, July 25:*** **Loverboy Steve** beat **Gutter** to become the cruiserweight champ ... ***Tornado Pro Wrestling, July 25:*** **Butch Dalton** and **Brian Lakewood** beat tag team champions **Rick Styles** and **Karl Davis** for the title ... ***UCW, July 24:*** **Brock Singleton** defeated **Fatty McNasty** to win the UCW championship... ***Premier Championship Wrestling, July 24:*** **Chris Stevens** and **Ronnie Attitude** defeated **Perfect Balance** to win the tag team championship ... ***National Wrestling Superstars, July 23:*** **Biggie Biggs** won a 12-man battle royal to capture the Jersey Shore title ... **J.L. Superstar** upset **Biggie Biggs** to capture the Jersey Shore title ... ***Texas Outlaw Promotions, July 19:*** **Wade Walker** defeated Texas champion **JPW** in a dog-collar ladder match to win the title ... ***KYDA Pro Wrestling, July 19:*** ***Spencer Christian*** won a hardcore battle royal to walk away with the KYDA Pro hardcore title ... ***IPW Hardcore Wrestling, July 19:*** **Steve Madison** became the new TV champion by defeating **Comic Book Guy Anderson** ... **Roderick Strong** defeated Florida unified cruiserweight champion **David Babylon** to win the title, which was promptly renamed the Florida unified junior heavyweight title ... ***GIWA, July 19:*** **A.J. Steele** defeated GIWA champion **Jake Slater** to win the title... ***NWA East, July 19:*** **Brian Anthony** defeated **Brandon K** to win the vacant brass knuckles championship ... ***NWA Virginia, July 18:*** **Mike Booth** and **Damian Wayne** won a tag team elimination match against **Jay** and **Trey Owens**, and **Dash Bennet** and **Ryan Spade** to win the tag title ... ***Southwest Wrestling Federation, July 12:*** **Darin** and **Kris Childs** won a triangle TLC match against **Enigma** and **Seth Shai**, and **Joker** and **Jimmy Tesla** to win the tag team title ... ***World Xtreme Wrestling, July 12:*** **Cliff Compton** and **Jake Bishop** beat **Los Lunatics** to win the tag team title ... **Billy Dream** won a battle royal to become the new heavyweight champion. □

World Xtreme Wrestling fans haven't seen the last of Afa Jr. If they're college football fans, they can watch him as he plays for the University of Pittsburgh Panthers.

the international report

By Mike Spillane

THE GREAT SASUKE has weathered his share of criticism, accepted his share of critical acclaim, and stood at the center of many a controversy during the last decade. In 1994, he was being touted as the greatest junior heavyweight in the world, coming off three showstopping performances at the Super J Cup Tournament. His forays into rock music and adult films cast an uncomfortable light on the owner of Michinoku Pro, but Sasuke has always been most interested in making headlines, regardless of the content.

With his recent election to the Japanese Diet, Sasuke has seen his name in plenty of those headlines, as he is already one of the most famous politicians in the Orient, simply because he wears a mask. All the attention suits Sasuke just fine, even though his fellow senators recently tried to undermine his political novelty act.

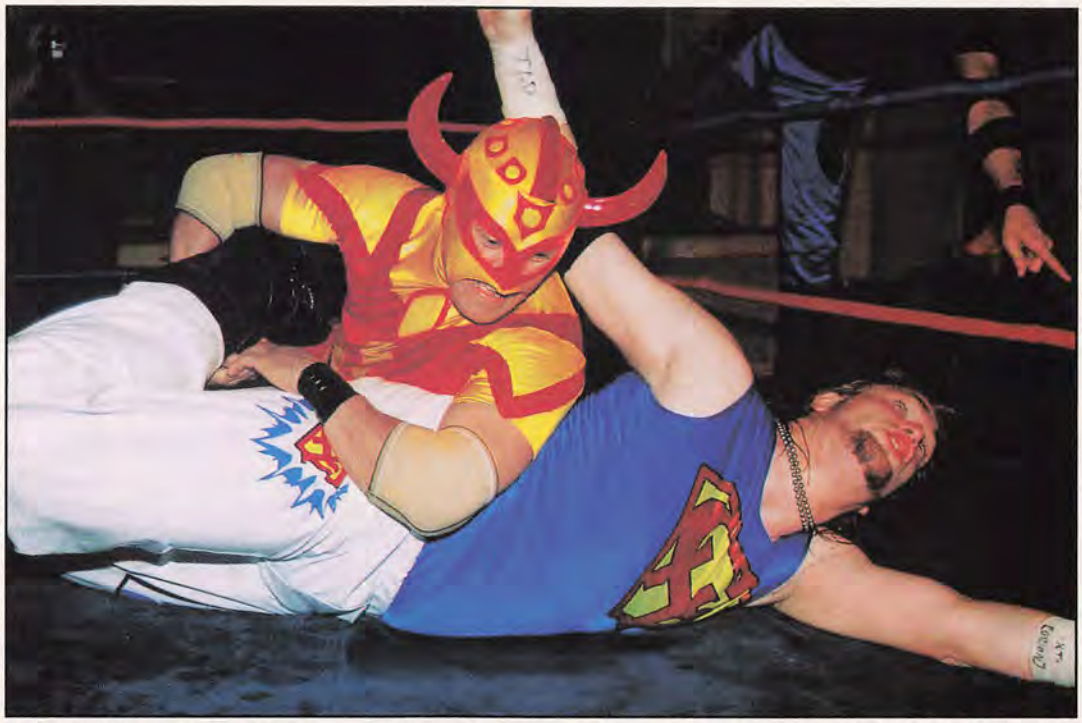
One vote was all that saved Sasuke from being forced to unmask when he attends chamber meetings with the Diet, but thanks to a narrow victory, the face of **Masanori Murakawa** will remain concealed behind the black mask of the Great Sasuke. Since it was Sasuke's name on the ballot, not Murakawa's, many of the senators feel that he was elected to serve in the guise of his wrestling persona. Others feel it makes a mockery of the serious political proceedings that the senators conduct on a daily basis. Even former Michinoku Pro star **Tiger Mask IV** has publicly stated that serving in office with a mask on is "highly illogical." However, many *puroresu* stars are happy to see coverage of any independent wrestler make the nightly news, even if it isn't always the most positive kind of coverage. Groups like Michinoku Pro, which confines the majority of its activity to one small part of Japan, are desperate for any type of mainstream exposure. So, of course, Sasuke is quite content to let the debate over his mask rage on.

The mask of the Great Sasuke will be allowed to stay on during proceedings in the Japanese Diet, to which he was recently elected. After all, it was Sasuke who was elected, not Masanori Murakawa, the man behind the mask.

Hiroshi Hase, one of New Japan's biggest stars in the 1980s and early-1990s, departed the group when he was elected to the Diet several years back. Although he is still active to this day, he spends the majority of his time concentrating on politics and less on publicity work and other pursuits. When he does wrestle, Hase has been known to appear with All-Japan Pro Wrestling, his base of operations since leaving New Japan. But recently he has been helping out old friend **Riki Choshu**, whose fledgling WJ Pro group has failed to make a major impact on the *puroresu* landscape thus far. A number of Japanese companies, like WJ Pro, All-Japan, and Zero-One, have hit hard times, as interest in wrestling as a whole has bottomed out in the Land of the Rising Sun. Even perennial favorite New Japan has seen serious dips in attendance and ratings.

Things aren't much better in Mexico,

where some of the country's most popular stars are leaving major organizations like AAA for the independent circuit. In recent weeks, both **Hector Garza** and **Perro Aguayo Jr.** have gone independent, in spite of the fact that they were considered AAA's top *rudo* and *technico,* respectively. Company regulars like **Heavy Metal**, **Latin Lover**, **La Parka Jr.**, **Octagon**, and **Mascara Sagrada** will be asked to carry the load until a new crop of stars can be created to bolster the roster. Recent appearances by legendary Luchadors like **El Canek** and **El Hijo del Santo** have helped keep interest fairly high in AAA house shows throughout Mexico. However, the typical length of Luchadors' careers has made it difficult for younger stars to find work, as men like **Mil Mascaras** continue to wrestle fairly regularly, even in the their mid- to late-60s. Stars with decades of history behind them, like **Villano III**, **Atlantis**, **Cien Caras**, **Dos Caras**, **Rey Misterio Sr.**, and **El Satanico**, continue to headline cards at ages at which most American wrestlers have long since retired. Some younger Luchadors, like **The Barrio Boys** and **Ricky Marvin**, are thus struggling to establish themselves.



Mexico's Skayde, the main trainer for Ultimo Dragon's Toryumon promotion, came to the U.S. for the first time this summer, wrestling the likes of Chris Hero in a tag team tournament in Pennsylvania. He also did a little instructing.

Carlos Colon's Puerto Rico-based WWC promotion has spent the last few months desperately trying to keep pace with its competition, **Victor Quinones'** IWA group. While TV ratings for the two companies are competitive each week, WWC's ticket sales have hit a major slump, while IWA's numbers continue to escalate. Things are so bleak for WWC that one of Carlos' sons, **Carly**, recently signed a WWE developmental deal and is leaving the family business in search of fame and fortune in the United States. Within the Puerto Rican wrestling community, this is seen as a definite sign of things to come for WWC. Before he departs for the States, Carly will face off with brother **Eddie Colon** to establish who is the company's top star. Whether or not the brother vs. brother rivalry will provide a short-term boost that the WWC needs so badly remains to be seen. Nevertheless, to try to boost ticket sales, ECW alumni **Sabu**, **The Sandman**, and **Chris Candido** have agreed to make appearances for the WWC.

Ultimo Dragon's Toryumon group is known for its fine roster of intense, technically sound junior heavyweights. While the gym bears the name of Dragon, the majority of the Toryumon roster was trained by **Skayde**, one of Mexico's best-kept secrets. Skayde has been training wrestlers from all over the world for years and years, and was instrumental in the development of many major international stars ranging from current CMLL light heavyweight champion **Ultimo Guerrero** to NWA welterweight champ **Yossino**. The submission virtuoso recently made his way to the United States for the very first time, where he teamed with protege **Koichiro "Arakencito" Arai** for the Tag World Grand Prix Tournament hosted by Pennsylvania independent CHIKARA. The duo earned a tremendous ovation from the Allentown audience with their flawless mat technique and innovative submissions. Skayde also played the role of guest instructor at CHIKARA's dojo, the Wrestle Factory, teaching four classes to American independent wrestlers.

The Toryumon has for years been host to some of the most coveted international titles recognized today. The British junior commonwealth title has passed through the promotion, as have the UWA trios, the NWA welterweight, and many other championships. Now the focus of the group is finally on its very own championship—the Ultimo Dragon Gym has created its own Toryumon title. **Magnum Tokyo** overcame reigning champ **CIMA** in a heated battle before a sellout crowd in Kobe, Japan, to capture the gold. Tokyo and CIMA have a feud dating back to the very beginning of the promotion, and their rivalry doesn't appear to be on the verge of ending. □

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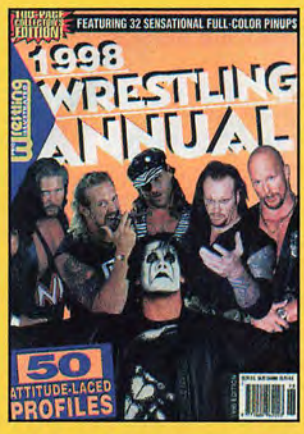

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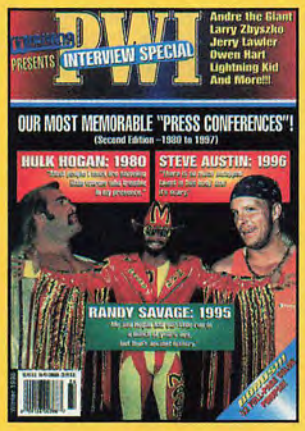

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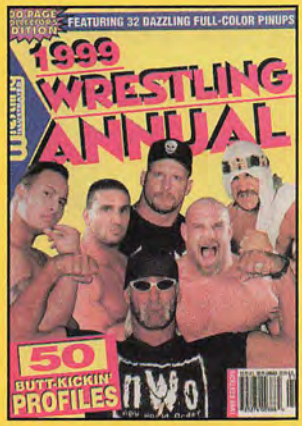

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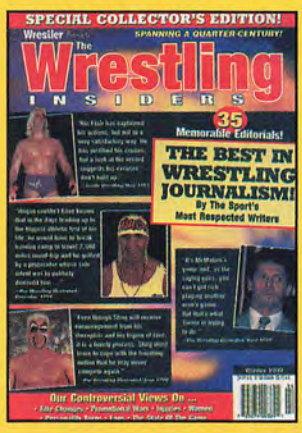
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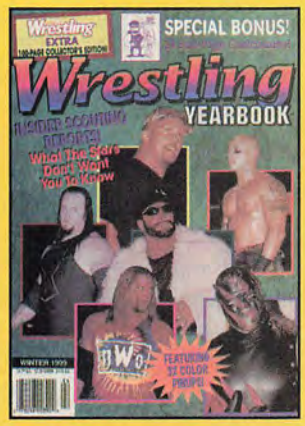

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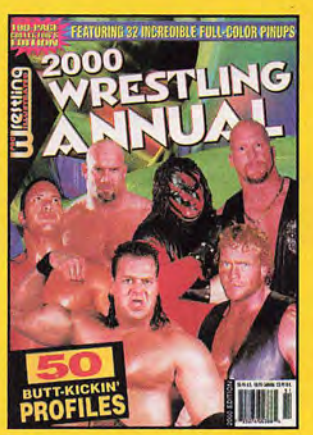

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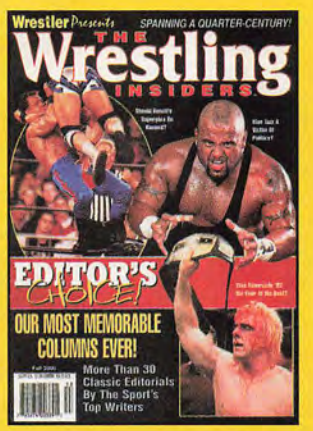
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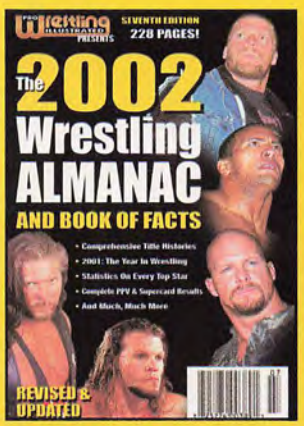
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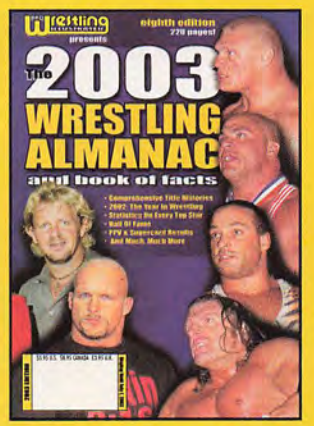

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Spotlight Card of the Month

ELIZABETH, NJ—Ring of Honor at the Rexplex: **Low-Ki** defeated **Deranged** ... **Matt Stryker** pinned **Jimmy Rave** ... **Rudy Boy Gonzales, Hotstuff Hernandez, Fast Eddie**, & **Don Juan** beat **Justin Credible, H.C. Loc, DeVito**, & **Masada** ... **Tony Mamaluke** & **John Walters** beat **The Outkast Killaz** ... **Tom Carter** pinned **Doug Williams** ... **B.J. Whitmer** defeated **Homicide, Dan Maff**, and **Colt Cabana** ... **Mikey Whipwreck, Hydro, Dixie**, & **Angel Dust** beat **Joel** & **Jose Maximo** & **The Backseat Boyz** in a tag team scramble match ... **Jeff Hardy** defeated **Krazy K** and **Joey Matthews** in a three-way match ... **C.M. Punk** pinned **Raven** in a dog-collar match ... Tag team champions **A.J. Styles** & **Red** beat **Jay** & **Mark Briscoe** ... Heavyweight champion **Samoa Joe** defeated **Paul London** by submission.
(07-19-03)

—"Spotlight" photos by Joe Zanolle

UNITED STATES

ALABAMA

BIRMINGHAM—Global Championship Wrestling at the Boutwell Auditorium: **Shark Boy** defeated **The Inhuman Fly** and **Joe Hogan** ... **Scotty Riggs** defeated **T.C. Carter** ... **Bull Buchanan** & **Guff Grayson** won a three-way bout against **The Trust Fund** and **Vinny V** & **Mason Fury** ... **Jim Duggan** defeated **Curtis Hughes** ... **J.J. Steele** & **Rod Fairfax** defeated **Bob** & **Steve Armstrong** ... **Buff Bagwell** defeated **Shawn Stasiak** ... **Night Prowler** & **Maddog Dan Sawyer** defeated **Dusty Rhodes** & **Rick Steiner** ... **Terry Funk** defeated **Raven**.
(07-11-03)

—Mark B. Vines

CALIFORNIA

CITY OF INDUSTRY—Pro Wrestling Guerrilla at Frank and Sons: **Charles Mercury, Sara Del Rey**, & **Supa Badd** defeated **Topgun Talwar, Zokre**, & **Ryan Dragon** ... **Excalibur** beat **Chris Bosh** ... **Scorpio Sky** & **Quicksilver** beat **Shane** & **Shannon Ballard** ... **Super Dragon** defeated **M-Dogg 20** ... **TARO** beat **Babi Slymm** ... **Hook Bomberry** & **Apolo Kahn** defeated **Mr. Excitement** & **Disco Machine** ... **Hardkore Kidd, Al Katrazz**, & **Adam Pearce** defeated **Joey Ryan, Scott Lost**, & **Billy Kim** ... **A.J. Styles** pinned **Frankie Kazarian**.
(07-26-03)

—Joey Ryan

SAN JOSE—WWE at the HP Pavilion: Raw tag team champions **Rene Dupree** & **Sylvan Grenier** beat **Buh Buh Ray** & **D-Von Dudley** ... **Rosey** pinned **Rodney Mack** ... Women's champion **Gail Kim** pinned **Molly Holly** ... **Kevin Nash, Scott Steiner**, & **Trish Stratus** beat **Steven Richards, Test**, & **Victoria** ... **Randy Orton** & **Lance Storm** beat **The Hurricane** & **Maven** ... Intercontinental champion **Booker T** pinned **Christian** ... **Kane** wrestled to a no-contest with **Rob Van Dam** ... Raw champion **Triple-H** pinned **Bill Goldberg**.
(07-20-03)

—Brad Freedman

ANAHEIM—WPW's Best of the West Tournament at the Anaheim Marketplace: ***In non-tournament matches:*** **Taji Ishamori** defeated **Henry Sugawara III** in the Toryumon X special attraction match ... **Desire** & **Sexy Chino** beat **R2K** & **Vennis DeMarco** ... **Catastrophe, Steve Pain**, & **El Genio** beat **Kid Omega, Chippy Sanchez**, & **Infernal Junior** ... ***Best of the West Tournament, first round:*** **Disco Machine** beat **Excalibur** ... **B-Boy** beat **Scorpio Sky** ... **Lil' Cholo** beat **Eric Matlock** ... **Tony Kozina** defeated **Joey Ryan** ... **Scott Lost** defeated **Hardkore Kidd** ... **Jardi Frantz** beat **Preston Scott** ... **Super Dragon** beat **Infernal** ... **Silver Tyger** beat **Billy Kim** ... ***Quarterfinals:*** B-Boy beat Disco Machine ... Lil' Cholo defeated Kozina ... Lost beat Frantz ... Super Dragon beat Silver Tyger ... ***Semifinals:*** B-Boy wrestled Lil' Cholo to a 10-minute draw ... Super Dragon wrestled Lost to a 10-minute draw ... ***Finals:*** Lil' Cholo beat Super Dragon, B-Boy, and Lost in a three-way bout to win the tournament.
(07-18-03)

—Bob Cramer

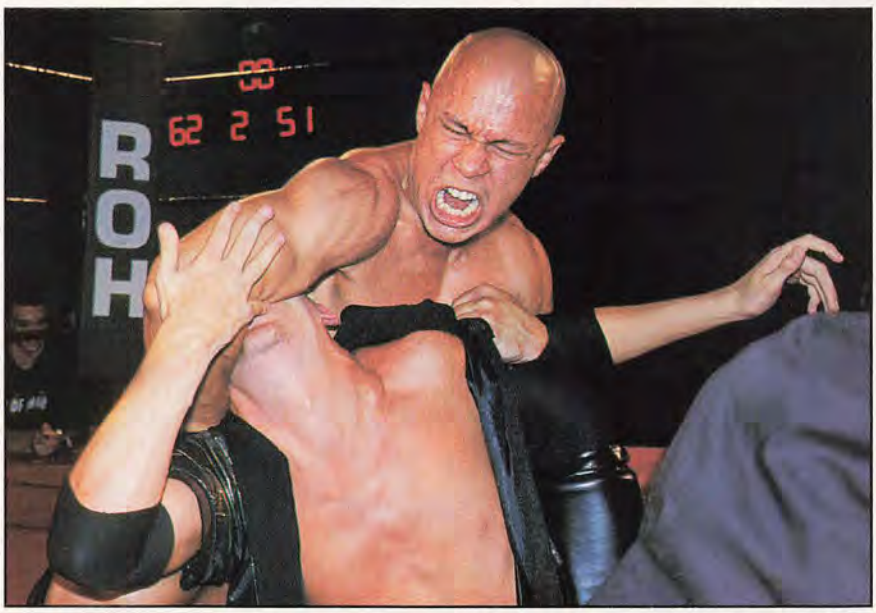
COLORADO

DENVER—WWE Vengeance pay-per-view at the Pepsi Center: **Eddie Guerrero** pinned **Chris Benoit** in the finals of the tournament for the vacant U.S. title after **Rhyno** interfered ... **Jamie Noble** pinned **Billy Gunn** ... **Bradshaw** won the "APA Invitational Barroom Brawl" ... Smackdown tag team champions **Shelton Benjamin** & **Charlie Haas** beat **Billy Kidman** & **Rey Misterio Jr.** ... **Sable** pinned **Stephanie McMahon** after **A-Train** interfered ... **The Undertaker** pinned **John Cena** ... **Vince McMahon** pinned **Zach Gowen** ... **Kurt Angle** defeated Smackdown champion **Brock Lesnar** and **The Big Show** in a three-way match to win the title when he pinned Lesnar.
(07-27-03)

—Frank Krewda

CONNECTICUT

UNCASVILLE—WWE at the Mohegan Sun Arena:



Returning to action for the first time since dislocating his collarbone, Low-Ki got this ROH show (which drew the biggest crowd in the promotion's history) off to a raucous start by annihilating Deranged with a Dragon clutch.

Torrie Wilson defeated **Nidia** ... **Rhyno** & **Rikishi** beat **Chuck Palumbo** & **Johnny Stamboli** ... **Billy Gunn** pinned **Jamie Noble** ... **John Cena** pinned **Orlando Jordan** ... Smackdown tag team champions **Eddie Guerrero** & **Tajiri** beat **A-Train** & **Sean O'Haire** ... **Billy Kidman** & **Spanky** beat **Crash Holly** & **Shannon Moore** ... Cruiserweight champion **Rey Misterio Jr.** beat **Matt Hardy** ... **Kurt Angle** & **Chris Benoit** beat **The Big Show**, **Shelton Benjamin**, & **Charlie Haas** in a handicap match.
(06-23-03)

—Bryan Nilson

HARTFORD—WWE at the Civic Center: **Scott Steiner** pinned **Test** ... Intercontinental champion **Christian** pinned **Booker T** ... **Goldust** pinned **Rico** ... **Randy Orton** pinned **Maven** ... Women's champion **Jazz** wrestled to a no-contest with **Victoria** ... **Buh Buh Ray** & **D-Von Dudley** beat **Rodney Mack** & **Christopher Nowinski** ... Raw tag team champions **Rene Dupree** & **Sylvan Grenier** defeated **Kane** & **Rob Van Dam** ... **Chris Jericho** beat **Val Venis** ... **Tommy Dreamer** & **The Hurricane** defeated **Lance Storm** & **Rosey** ... Raw champion **Triple-H** pinned **Kevin Nash** in a no-disqualification streetfight.
(06-21-03)

—Angie Thomas

DELAWARE

DOVER—Combat Zone Wrestling's Tournament of Death 2 at Rack's Bar & Billiards: ***In non-tournament matches:*** **Trent Acid** beat **Z-Barr** ... **Ian Knoxx** beat **Chris Cash**, **Rick Feinberg**, **Cory Castle**, **Niles Young**, and **Jude** in a CZW students match (**Jon Dahmer** served as special guest referee) ... **Johnny Kashmere** defeated **Nick Berk** ... **B-Boy** & **Messiah** beat **Sonjay Dutt** & **Ruckus** ... ***Quarterfinals:*** **Zandig** defeated **Nate Webb** in a pane of glass death match ... **Nick Mondo** defeated **J.C. Bailey** in a light tubes match ... **Necro Butcher** beat **Cpl. Robinson** in a four corners of pain death match ... **Ian Rotten** beat **Nick Gage** in a barbed-wire board and light tube table match ... ***Semifinals:*** Rotten beat Butcher in a fans-bring-the-weapons match ... Mondo defeated Zandig in a best-of-three-falls log cabin death match (winner must send opponent through a log cabin of light tubes twice) ... ***Finals:*** Mondo defeated Rotten in a 200 light tubes/barbed-wire ropes match.
(07-26-03)

—Darrell Taylor

WILMINGTON—East Coast Wrestling Association at St. Matthew's Parish Hall: **Louie** won a rookie battle royal ... **Mike Kruel** won a three-way match against **Low-Ki** and **John Walters** ... **The Japanese Pool Boy** beat **Bob Evans** ... **Billy Bax** & **Rob Eckos** beat **Xero** & **Nick Malakai** ... **Mike Fury** defeated **Mozart Fontaine** ... **Cyco** beat **Joey Maxx** ... **Trinity** defeated **Mr. Ooh La La** ... Tag team champs **Striker** & **Ace Darling** defeated **Cheetah Master** & **Johnny Maxx** ... Heavyweight champion **Christopher Daniels** defeated **Prince Nana**.
(07-26-03)

—Joe Wendell

DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA

WASHINGTON—WWE at the MCI Center: **Torrie Wilson** beat **Nidia** (**Dawn Marie** was the guest referee) ... **Spanky** beat **Shannon Moore** ... **Orlando Jordan** defeated **Crash Holly** ... **Rhyno** & **Rikishi** beat **Chuck Palumbo** & **Johnny Stamboli** ... **Billy Gunn** beat **John Cena** ... **Billy Kidman** defeated **Matt Hardy** and **Jamie Noble** in a three-way match ... Smackdown tag team champions **Eddie Guerrero** & **Tajiri** defeated **A-Train** & **Sean O'Haire** ... **Kurt Angle** & **Chris Benoit** beat **The Big Show**, **Shelton Benjamin**, & **Charlie Haas** in a handicap match.
(06-21-03)

—Ilya Zakharov

FLORIDA

ORLANDO—Major League Wrestling at the Tabu Night Club: **Steve Williams** & **The Sandman** defeated **Simon Diamond** & **C.W. Anderson** ... Heavyweight champion **Steve Corino** pinned **Mike Awesome** ... **Terry Funk** defeated **Abdullah the Butcher** in a bounty match ... **C.M. Punk** & **Michael Shane** defeated **Norman Smiley** & **Raven** ... **Richard Criado** pinned **Nosawa** ... **Mikey Whipwreck** pinned **Sabu** ... **Simon Diamond** pinned **The Sandman** ... **Homicide** pinned **Jerry Lynn** ... **Steve Williams** pinned **C.W. Anderson** ... **The Samoan Island Tribe** and **Da Hit Squad** wrestled to a no-contest ... **Josh Daniels** defeated **Richard Criado** ... **Los Maximos** defeated **Jimmy Yang** & **Tony Mamaluke**.
(07-26-03)

—Paul Prentiss

Matt Stryker ended up beating Jimmy Rave, but he sure didn't get all that far in this early test of strength.

GEORGIA

MILLEDGEVILLE—GIWA at Capital City: **Cru Jones** beat **Bank Barfield** ... **Mac Davis** and **The Professor** wrestled to a double-countout ... **Sean Logan** & **Lance Christian** defeated **Oko Nono** & **Primetime Bryan** ... **Vordell Walker** defeated **Preston Paradise** ... Mid-state champion **Johnny Camo** beat **Cru Jones** by disqualification ... **Mike Stratus** & **Matt Black** defeated **The Freak** & **Lance Christian** ... **A.J. Steele** defeated heavyweight champion **Jake Slater** to win the title.
(07-19-03)

—Anthony Hall

ATHENS—NWA Wildside at the Athens Arena: **Skeeter Frost** beat **Nick Halen** ... Tag team champs **Scott Cage** & **Kaos** beat **Scott E. Smooth** & **Brandon Knight** ... Junior heavyweight champ **Seth Delay** beat **Salvatore Rinauro** ... **Onyx** & **Slim J** beat **Murder One** & **Mikal Adrian** ... **Murder One** & **Todd Sexton** beat **Jason Blackman** & **Jeff Lewis** ... **Gabriel** beat **Azrael** by disqualification ... **Rainman** & **Azrael** beat **Jeremy V** & **Gabriel** ... **David Young** beat **Jimmy Rave** by disqualification.
(07-12-03)

—Harry Williams

EAST DUBLIN—GIWA at the East Laurens Elementary School Gym: **R. Hamma** defeated **Paul Woods** ... **Dan Ivey** and **Austin Kane** wrestled to a double-countout ... **Matt Black** beat **Jerry Lewis Jr.** ... **Sean Logan** defeated **Oko Nono** ... Mid-state champion **Johnny Camo** beat **The Freak** ... **Chad Barfield** & **Preston Paradise** beat **Mac Davis** & **Firewalker** ... **Mike Stratus** defeated **Vordell Walker** ... **A.J. Steele** beat heavyweight champion **Jake Slater** by disqualification.
(06-28-03)

—Dave Whitaker

WARNER ROBINS—Superior Wrestling at the Civic Center: **Lash LeRoux** defeated **Chris Marlin** ... **Damien Dynamite** wrestled to a no-contest with **Jorge Estrada** when **Scott Norton** interfered ... **Glacier** & **Larry Zbyszko** beat **David Taylor** & **Bobby Eaton** ... **Sgt. Buddy Lee Parker** defeated **NWO Sting** ... **Ron Reis** & **Sgt. Buddy Lee Parker** beat **Scott Norton** in a handicap lumberjack match.
(06-20-03)

—Dave Whitaker

ILLINOIS

PEORIA—Next Generation Wrestling at the Peoria Athletic Club: **Kody Kash** & **Johnny Justice** defeated **M.C. Trip C** in a handicap tag match ... **Shane Griffin** beat **Jester** ... Heavyweight champion **Deacon Hobbs** beat **Russ Stevens** ... **Sinnister** beat **Camera Man Ray** ... **Vance Venom** defeated **Mr. 12 Inches** ... **Chris Hazard** beat **Justin MacIntyre**.
(07-26-03)

—Jason Pemberton

QUINCY—Midwest Powerhouse Wrestling at Roller Country: **The Crocodile Kid** beat **Agent C** ... **Chico Es Loco** and **Agent U** wrestled to a no-contest ... **Jaden** defeated **Gary Michael G** ... **The Searcher** wrestled **Christian Haze** to a no-contest ... Tag team champions **The Agency** beat **Chico Es Loco** & **The Crocodile Kid** ... **The**

Hotstuff Hernandez helped his team win an eight-man weapons match by using four chairs as a makeshift landing strip for Masada as he executed a Razor's edge on him.

Searcher & **Christian Haze** beat **Damien Blade** & **Marcs Mansfield** ... Missouri State champion **Damien Blade** won a battle royal in which the title was on the line.
(07-26-03)

—Chip Leffler

SPRINGFIELD—New Midwest Wrestling at the USA Sports Center: ***Alexis Homeier Memorial Tournament, semifinals:*** **Eric Logan** pinned **Michael Shard** ... **Dredd Walker** pinned **Tom Arson** ... ***Finals:*** Logan pinned Walker to win the tournament ... ***In non-tournament matches:*** **Earl Grissom** pinned **Doug Fraze** ... Central Illinois champion **Billy Morgan** beat **El Diablo Silverado** by disqualification ... **Lucious P. Cotrain** pinned **El Pollo Loco** ... **The New Church of RON** pinned **Sage Ramsey** & **Jason Wells** to win the tag title ... **Toga Steve** pinned **Garret Ryan** ... **New World Quinten** pinned **Scotty Cash** ... Heavyweight champ **Guy Smith** beat **Stan Sallinger** by reverse decision.
(07-26-03)

—Steven Lucas

INDIANA

TERRE HAUTE—WWE at the ISU Hulman Center: **Maven** pinned **Rico** ... **Lance Storm** defeated **Garrison Cade** ... **Mark Jindrak** & **Rodney Mack** beat **Tommy Dreamer** & **Rosey** ... Women's champion **Gail Kim** beat **Trish Stratus** and **Molly Holly** in a three-way match (**Val Venis** was the guest referee) ... **Kevin Nash** & **Rob Van Dam** beat **Ric Flair** & **Randy Orton** ... **Scott Steiner** pinned **Test** ... Intercontinental champion **Booker T** pinned **Christian** ... Raw tag team champions **Rene Dupree** & **Sylvan Grenier** beat **Buh Buh Ray** & **D-Von Dudley**.
(07-13-03)

—Dominick Valenti

KENTUCKY

GEORGETOWN—Central Wrestling Alliance at the Convention Center: **Cujo** defeated **Syxe** ... **Tommy Green** defeated **Bo Johnson** by reverse decision ... **Cash Money** defeated **Jimmy Lamb** ... **Mongoose**, **Dick Dalton**, & **Psycho Ninja** defeated **J.T. Money**, **Boxcar Bruce**, & **Terry Alan** ... **Larry B** defeated heavyweight champ **Jad T. Lungini** to win the title ... **Kandi Mae** won a battle royal.
(07-27-03)

—Steve Warren

CAMPBELLSVILLE—UCW at the National Guard Armory: **The Bully** pinned **J.D. Thunder** ... **Beer Man** pinned **Maxx Mizery** ... **Kid Dynamite** beat **Otis Bass** by disqualification ... **Bill Lewis** pinned **Terry England** in a Southern title match ... Heavyweight champion **Doug Vines** beat **Jeff Crowe** by disqualification ... **Kid Dynamite**, **Beer Man**, **Terry England**, & **J.D. Thunder** beat **Bill Lewis**, **Jeff Crowe**, **Otis Bass**, & **Maxx Mizery**.
(07-12-03)

—Fred Flynn

SOMERSET—HCW Championship Wrestling at the National Guard Armory: **Dub C** & **Amazing Pookie** beat **Evil Intentions** ... **Chosen One** & **Mike Harris** wrestled to a double-disqualification with **Louisville Mugger** & **Alex Walker** ... **Shawn Christopher** beat **Ric Gunner** in a best-of-three-falls match to win the heavyweight title ... **Louisville Mugger** & **Alex Walker** co-won a bunkhouse stampede.
(07-11-03)

—Darrell Fugate

MAINE

AUGUSTA—WWE at the Civic Center: **The Basham Brothers** defeated **Chris Benoit** & **Rhyno** ... **Ultimo Dragon** beat **Jamie Noble** ... **Chuck Palumbo**, **Nunzio**, & **Johnny Stamboli** beat **Bradshaw**, **Faarooq**, & **Spanky** ... **Torrie Wilson** defeated **Dawn Marie** and **Nidia** in a bikini contest ... Cruiserweight champion **Rey Misterio Jr.** beat **Billy Kidman** ... **Billy Gunn** pinned **Matt Hardy** ... Smackdown tag team champions **Eddie Guerrero** & **Tajiri** beat **A-Train** & **Sean O'Haire** and **Shelton Benjamin** & **Charlie Haas** in an elimination match ... **Kurt Angle** & **Brock Lesnar** defeated **The Big Show** & **John Cena**.
(06-29-03)

—Larry Frazier

MARYLAND

GLEN BURNIE—Maryland Championship Wrestling's last show at Michael's Eighth Avenue: **Mark** & **Jay Briscoe** beat **Jose** & **Joel Maximo**... **2-Dope** & **Sideswype** won a tag team triangle match over **Chad Bowman** & **Dino Divine** and **Buzz Stryker** & **Derek Wayne** ... **Doug Delicious** won a triangle match over **Bob Starr** and **Marcus Jordan** ... **Chris Devine** won a three-way dance against **Rob Eckos** and **Matt Stryker** ... **Gillberg**, **Kelly Bell**, **Van Hammer**, & **Headbanger Thrasher** beat **The Holy Rollers**, **Brock Singleton**, & **Genesis** ... **Crash Holly** pinned **Adam Flash** ... A rookie battle royal ended in no-contest when **Bruiser** and **Billy Redwood** interfered ... **Julio Dinero** & **Jimmy Cicero** beat **Bruiser** & **Billy Redwood** ... **Danny Doring** won a three-way dance over **Chris Chetti** and **Romeo Valentino** ... **Scott Chong** beat **Larry Kennedy** by submission ... **Christian York** won the fifth annual Shane Shamrock Memorial Cup in a six-way match; other participants were **Joey Matthews**, **Crash Holly**, **Reckless Youth**, **Qenaan Creed**, and **Jay Briscoe**.
(07-16-03)

—Timothy A. Walker

OCEAN CITY—WWE at the Convention Center: **Sable** defeated **Nidia** and **Dawn Marie** in a bikini contest ... **Ultimo Dragon** beat **Jamie Noble** ... **The Basham Brothers** defeated **Funaki** & **Spanky** ... **Matt Hardy** beat **Shannon Moore** ... **A-Train** defeated **Orlando Jordan** ... **Billy Gunn** beat **John Cena** ... **Bradshaw** & **Faarooq** beat **Chuck Palumbo** & **Johnny Stamboli** ... Smackdown tag team champions **Shelton Benjamin** & **Charlie Haas** beat **Chris Benoit** & **Rhyno**.
(07-06-03)

—Harry Burkett

FREDERICK—WWE at Harry Grove Stadium: **Sable** defeated **Dawn Marie** and **Nidia** in a bikini challenge ... **Ultimo Dragon** beat **Jamie Noble** ... **The Basham Brothers** defeated **Funaki** & **Spanky** ... **Matt Hardy** defeated **Shannon Moore** ... **A-Train** pinned **Orlando Jordan** ... **Billy Gunn** pinned **John Cena** ... **Bradshaw** & **Faarooq** beat **Chuck Palumbo** & **Johnny Stamboli** ... Smackdown tag team champions **Shelton Benjamin** & **Charlie Haas** beat **Chris Benoit** & **Rhyno**.
(07-05-03)

—Dominick Valenti

MASSACHUSETTS

FALL RIVER—SCCW at Kennedy Park: **Nick Narcisstic** beat **Gino Giovanni** ... **Shawn Candido** beat **Jimmy Preston** ... **Ryan Waters** & **Tex McCoy** beat **Moco** & **Julias Sweet** ... Women's champion **Allaylah Silky** won a three-way bout against **Trinity H. Campbell** and **Athena** ... YPW champ **Nick Steel** beat **Woody McGraw** ... **Stryker** won a five-way elimination match against **Rex Lethal**, **The Kreeper**, **Raging Bull**, and **Mark Damon** ... **Vain** & **Duke Maximum** beat **Kid Pyro** & **Tremor** ... Heavyweight champ **Johnny Angel** beat **Troy Bond.**
(07-04-03)

—Joe Vincent

FALL RIVER—SCCW at the PAL Hall: **Mark Damon** beat **Mathmatico** ... **Troy Bond** beat **Mike Majors** ... **Allaylah Silky** & **Sienna Blaze** beat **Trinity H. Campbell** & **Athena** ... **Nick Narcisstic** beat **Gino Giovanni** ... **The Portuguese Stallion** beat **Kid Capri**... **Stryker** beat **The Portuguese Stallion** ... **Tremor** & **The Kreeper** beat **Stevie Sky** & **The Crazy** ... **G.Q. Smooth** beat **C.J. Summers**.
(06-27-03)

—Mike George

MICHIGAN

HARRISON—Blue Water Championship Wrestling at the Clare County Fairgrounds: Cruiserweight champ **Trik Nasty** defeated **Chance Prophet** ... **Hailey Hatred** beat **Justin Barger** in an intergender match ... Tag team champs **Team Dammitt** defeated **Southern Justice** ... **Dan Severn** beat **Matt Longtime** ... NWA-TNA X champ **Chris Sabin** won a fatal four-way match against **Truth Martini**, **Buddy Hanlon**, and **Rick Solid** ... **Julian the Warlock** beat **Sean Casey** by disqualification.
(07-31-03)

HAMTRAMCK—Insane Wrestling Federation at the Knights of Columbus Hall: **Petey Williams** defeated **Don Crisis** ... **Buddy Hanlon** defeated **Ryan Boz** ... **Monty Brown** defeated **Damon Starr** ... Cruiserweight champ **Gutter** defeated **Alex Shelly** ... **Loverboy Steve** defeated cruiserweight champ **Gutter** to win the title ... **Poison Apollo** defeated **Drew the Don** ... **Chris Sabin** defeated **Danny Daniels** ... **Madman Pondo** defeated **Nate Webb** ... **Joe E. Legend** defeated **D-Lo Brown** in a best-of-three-falls match ... **The DBA** & **Cpl. Robinson** defeated **The Necro Butcher** & **Brimstone** in a no-disqualification streetfight.
(07-25-03)

—Aaron McMann

MINNESOTA

MAPLE GROVE—Midwest Pro Wrestling at the MPW Arena: **John Johnson** beat **Halo** ... **Pretty Boy Delgado** beat **Silas Young** ... **Jake Classic** beat **The Punisher** ... **John Johnson** beat **Red Lightning** ... **Ben Sailor** beat **Gator** ... **Shimdog** beat **El Veijo**.
(07-20-03)

—Nicholas Loken

MISSOURI

ST. LOUIS—Gateway Championship Wrestling at Aggie's Banquet Hall: **Sam Bacardi** defeated **Mike the Mime** in an Ironman match ... **Night Breed** defeated **Johnny Greenpeace** & **Daizee Haze** ... **Cavana Fantastic** defeated **Sean Vincent** ... **Kevin Sharp** defeated **Ian Storm** and **Chris Hargis** in a triple threat match ... **Danny Kidman** defeated **Johnny Hardcore** ... **Makaze** defeated **Pete Madden** ... **Matt Sydal** wrestled **Jynx** to a draw ... **The Rock 'n' Roll Kid** defeated **The Ragin' Cajun** ... **Billy McNeil** defeated **Jack Adonis** by disqualification ... Light heavyweight champion **Ms. Chif** defeated **Outtkast** ... Heavyweight champion **Nikki Strychnine** wrestled **Delirious** to a no-contest ... **The Fourth Reich** defeated **Dingo**, **Big Bad Ben**, & **Billy McNeil** and **Diabolic Khaos** in an impromptu nine-man elimination triple threat tag match.
(07-12-03)

—Dorian Sinclair

NEBRASKA

OMAHA—WWE at the Civic Arena: Raw tag team champions **Rene Dupree** & **Sylvan Grenier** beat **Buh Buh Ray** & **D-Von Dudley** ... **Rico** defeated **Mark Jindrak** ... **Spike Dudley** pinned **Garrison Cade** ... Women's champion **Gail Kim** beat **Trish Stratus** and **Molly Holly** in a three-way match ... **Scott Steiner** & **Maven** beat **Randy Orton** & **Lance Storm** ... **Tommy Dreamer** & **Rosey** beat **Rodney Mack** & **Christopher Nowinski** ... Intercontinental champion **Booker T** pinned **Christian** ... **Triple-H** & **Kane** defeated **Kevin Nash** & **Rob Van Dam**.
(07-11-03)

—Bruce Weiner

NEW JERSEY

NEPTUNE—ACWA at the Shark River Hills Volunteer Fire Company: **Shawn Donavan** defeated **Max Gatea** ... **Alicia** defeated **Sienna Blaze** ... **Bobby Piper** defeated **Billy Lasiter** by disqualification ... **The Orphan** defeated **Travis Blake** ... **Ryan Wing** defeated **Kevin Knight** ... **Roman** defeated **C.J. Summers.**
(07-26-03)

—Jen Xavier

NEW YORK

QUEENS—Impact Championship Wrestling at the Elks Lodge: **Dru Blood** & **Devin Moore** beat **Los Boricuas** ... **Stryker** beat **Eddie Guapo** ... **Monsta Mack** beat **Boogalou** by disqualification ... **The Solution** beat **Dirty Rotten Scoundrelz** ... **Danny Maff** won a four-corners match against **Azrael**, **Dan Barry**, and **Johnny Ova** ... **Tim Arson** won a triangle match against **Danny Demanto** and **Damian Dragon** ... **Grim Reefer** beat **Chris Hamrick** ... **The Backseat Boyz** wrestled **The Christopher Street Connection** to a 10-minute draw ... Northeastern champ **Xavier** beat **Prince Nana** ... **Joel** & **Jose Maximo** beat **Boogie Knights** ... **Abdullah the Butcher** beat **Louie Ramos** in a hardcore match ... Heavyweight champion **Justin Credible** beat **Mikey Whipwreck** ... **Jerry Lynn** beat **Homicide**.
(07-18-03)

—Steven Rossi

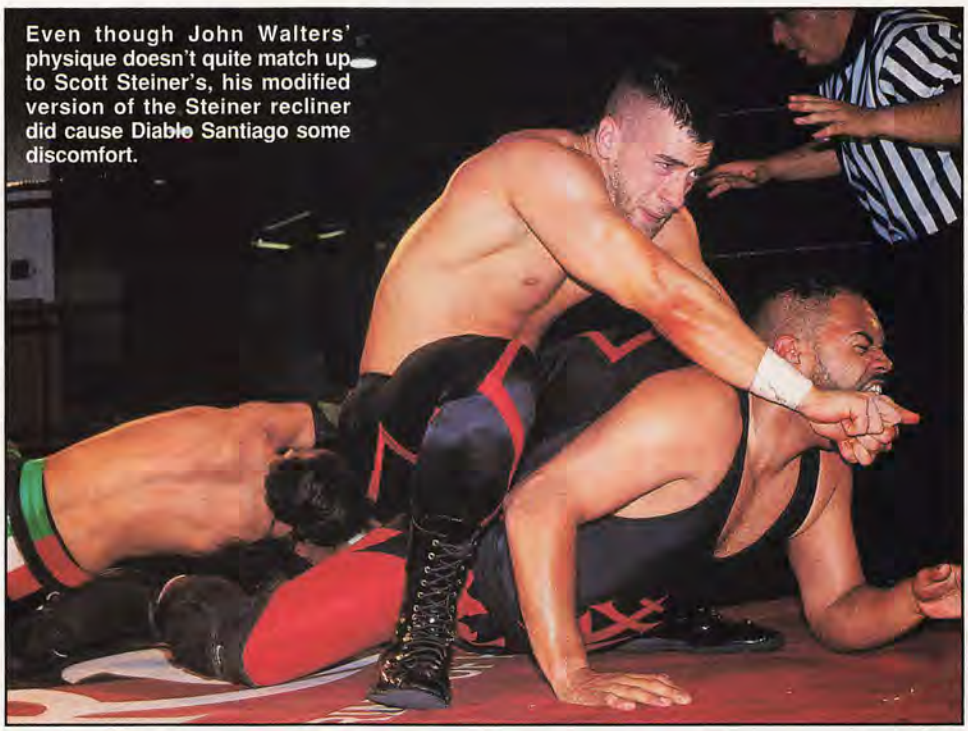
UTICA—WWE at the Memorial Auditorium: **Shelton Benjamin** & **Charlie Haas** defeated **Chris Benoit** & **Rhyno** and **A-Train** & **Sean O'Haire** in an elimination match ... **Ultimo Dragon** beat **Jamie Noble** ... **Bradshaw**, **Faarooq**, & **Spanky** beat **Chuck Palumbo**, **Johnny Stamboli**, & **Nunzio** ... **Torrie Wilson** defeated **Dawn Marie** and **Nidia** in a bikini contest ... Smackdown tag team champions **Eddie Guerrero** & **Tajiri** beat **The Basham Brothers** ... **Matt Hardy** pinned **Billy Gunn** ... Cruiserweight champion **Rey Misterio Jr.** beat **Billy Kidman** ... **Kurt Angle** & **Brock Lesnar** defeated **The Big Show** & **John Cena**.
(06-30-03)

—Paul Moran

ROCHESTER—Rochester Pro Wrestling at the RPW Arena: **Swinger Sidusky** wrestled to a no-contest with **Steve Kruz** ... **Texas Outlaw** defeated **Punk** ... **Gabriel Saint** pinned **Brent Williams** ... **Eric Everlast** beat **Big Papa Chill** ... A five-man battle royal was ruled a no-contest when **Rik Matrix** & **Huber Boy 2** interfered ... **Shockwave** defeated **Kid Justice** ... **Miss DeVille** & **Desire** defeated **Kenny Cassanova** & **Marty Vain** ... **Rik Matrix** defeated **Mean Marcos** by disqualification ... **Ian Decay** pinned **Kevin Dunn** in a streetfight to win the heavyweight title.
(06-29-03)

—Dan Murphy

SYRACUSE—WWE at the On Center: **Scott Steiner** defeated **Test** ... **Spike Dudley** pinned **Steven Richards** ... Intercontinental champion **Christian** pinned **Goldust** ... **Mark Jindrak** & **Randy Orton** beat **Garrison Cade** & **Maven** ... Raw tag team champions **Rene Dupree** & **Sylvan Grenier** beat **Buh Buh Ray** & **D-Von Dudley** ... **The Hurricane** & **Val Venis** beat **Rodney Mack** & **Rosey** ... **Tommy Dreamer**



Even though John Walters' physique doesn't quite match up to Scott Steiner's, his modified version of the Steiner recliner did cause Diablo Santiago some discomfort.

pinned **Rico** ... Raw champion **Triple-H** pinned **Rob Van Dam**.
(06-29-03)

—James Fine

ELMIRA—WWE at the Coach USA Center: Raw tag team champions **Rene Dupree** & **Sylvan Grenier** beat **D-Von** & **Spike Dudley** ... **Mark Jindrak** & **Randy Orton** defeated **Garrison Cade** & **Maven** ... **Gail Kim** & **Ivory** beat **Molly Holly** & **Victoria** ... Intercontinental champion **Christian** pinned **Goldust** ... **The Hurricane** & **Val Venis** defeated **Rodney Mack** & **Rosey** ... **Scott Steiner** defeated **Test** ... **Tommy Dreamer** pinned **Rico** ... Raw champion **Triple-H** defeated **Rob Van Dam**.
(06-28-03)

—Wayne Wilson

POUGHKEEPSIE—WWE at the Mid-Hudson Civic Center: **Scott Steiner** pinned **Lance Storm** ... **The Hurricane** & **Val Venis** beat **Rodney Mack** & **Rosey** ... **Randy Orton** defeated **Maven** ... **Tommy Dreamer** pinned **Rico** ... Raw tag team champions **Rene Dupree** & **Sylvan Grenier** beat **Buh Buh Ray** & **D-Von Dudley** ... Intercontinental champion **Christian** pinned **Goldust** ... **Molly Holly** & **Victoria** beat **Gail Kim** & **Ivory** ... Raw champion **Triple-H** pinned **Rob Van Dam**.
(06-27-03)

—Will Welsh

Tom Carter has ditched his Reckless Youth moniker in Ring of Honor, but his technical skills are as formidable as ever. He needed them all to beat rugged Englishman Doug Williams.

ALBANY—WWE at the Pepsi Center: **Tommy Dreamer**, **The Hurricane**, & **Val Venis** beat **Steven Richards**, **Lance Storm**, & **Rosey** ... **Scott Steiner** beat **Test** ... **Randy Orton** pinned **Maven** ... **Victoria** beat women's champion **Jazz** by disqualification ... **Buh Buh Ray** & **D-Von Dudley** defeated **Rodney Mack** & **Christopher Nowinski** ... Intercontinental champion **Christian** beat **Booker T** ... Raw tag team champions **Rene Dupree** & **Sylvan Grenier** beat **Rob Van Dam** & **Kane** ... **Goldust** defeated **Rico** ... Raw champion **Triple-H** defeated **Kevin Nash** in a no-disqualification streetfight.
(06-22-03)

—Anthony Harmon

WHEATFIELD—Empire State Wrestling at the St. Johnsburg Fire Hall: **Randy Walker** defeated **Flatline** by disqualification ... **The Sons of Thunder** beat **J.P. Hawk** & **Damien Alexander** ... **Chris Cooper** pinned **Sakura** ... Hardcore champion **Marc Mandrake** beat **Dre Gibson** ... Interstate champion **Tommy Caliber** pinned **TSK** ... **Shade** defeated **Cade Cassidy** in a casket match ... **Chris Cavana** pinned **Lance Steel** ... **Mastiff** defeated heavyweight champion **Johnny Puma** by disqualification.
(06-21-03)

—Dan Murphy

NORTH CAROLINA

WINSTON-SALEM—New Empire Wrestling at the VFW Hall: **American Steel Ninja** won a 10-man battle royal ... **GeeStar** defeated **Trent Wylde** ... **Corey Edsel** defeated **Paco Loco** ... Regional champion **Ric Converse** defeated **Brass Munkey** ... National champion **J-Money** defeated **American Steel Ninja** ... **Matt Houston** & **Kurt Solo** defeated **Brad Attitude** & **Brad Rainz**.
(07-27-03)

—Tara Rheaume & Grant Sawyer

WINSTON-SALEM—United Pro Wrestling Coalition at Regal Ford: Lightweight champion **Righteous Rider** defeated **Crash Test** ... **James Reno** defeated **Aaron Devil** in a hardcore match ... **Cory Edsel** defeated **John Thundercloud** ... **Steve McMichaels** defeated **Scotty Matthews** ... Carolina champion **Mr. Smooth** & **J-Money** defeated tag team champions **The Wild-Eyed Southern Boys** in a non-title match ... **Scotty Mathews** won a battle royal.
(07-26-03)

—Tara Rheaume

ELKIN—Allied Independent Wrestling Federation at the Armory: **Bloodlust** defeated **Picasso** ... **Insane Shane** beat **Chance** ... **Mr. Nobody** defeated **Smooth** ... **Robbie Evil** won a three-way match against **Lucious Kevin** and **Bad Brad** ... **Big Daddy** defeated **Big Country** ... **Mauler** & **Jeckel** defeated **Sexy Kevina** & **Jamie Jannetty** ... U.S. champion **Poison** beat **Azrael** ... **Creeping Death** & **Brian Danzig** defeated tag team champions **Baine** & **Ashe** to win the title ... Sovereign champion **Major Havoc** defeated **Chris Deal**.
(07-26-03)

—Marty Tobias

OHIO

LORAIN—Mega Championship Wrestling at Sports-N-Stuff: **J.D.B.** defeated **Christian Faith** ... **Sheik Hassan**, **Dick Trimmins**, & **Super Destroyer III** defeated **Fabulous**, **Kidrageous**, **Brandon X**, & **Fresh Aaronsyn** in a handicap match ... **Mike McDiddy** defeated **Perry Greene** ... **J.T. Lightning** defeated **Twist** ... **Spence Slater** defeated **Glenn Spectre** ... **The Bouncer** and **Johnny Blaze** wrestled to a no-contest ... **The Bouncer** defeated **Jake Garrett** ... **Sean Styles** defeated **Canadian Bad Boy** ... U.S. champion **J-Rocc** defeated **Adam Cage** in a match in which the loser had to wear a chicken suit.
(07-25-03)

—Joe Vincent

CLEVELAND—WWE at Gund Arena: **Sable** defeated **Torrie Wilson**, **Nidia**, and **Dawn Marie** in a bikini challenge ... **Ultimo Dragon** beat **Jamie Noble** ... **The Basham Brothers** defeated **Funaki** & **Spanky** ... **A-Train** pinned **Orlando Jordan** ... **Matt Hardy** pinned **Shannon Moore** ... **Bradshaw** & **Faarooq** beat **Chuck Palumbo** & **Johnny Stamboli** ... **Billy Gunn** defeated **John Cena** ... Smackdown tag team champions **Shelton Benjamin** & **Charlie Haas** beat **Chris Benoit** & **Rhyno** ... Smackdown champion **Brock Lesnar** beat **The Big Show** and **Kurt Angle** in a triple threat match.
(07-07-03)

—John Damiani

PENNSYLVANIA

ALLENTOWN—CHIKARA at St. John's Auditorium: **Gran Akuma** pinned **Eddie Kingston** ... **American Gigolo** defeated **Jolly Roger** ... **Night Shift** beat **Ultra/Zero** in the finals of the Tag World Grand Prix ... **Icarus** pinned **Jack Marciano** ... **Mike Quackenbush**, **D.J. Skittlez**, & **Sumie Sakai** beat **The Conundrum** & **Mercedes Martinez** in a best-of-three-falls match.
(07-26-03)

—Randy Foster

ALLENTOWN—WXW "Sportsfest" at Cedar Beach: **Damian Adams** defeated **Rob Eckos** ... **Moondog Molsonn** pinned **Nikolai Volkoff** ... **Havoc** beat **Perfect Creation** by submission ... **Cindy Rogers** eliminated **April Hunter** to win a battle royal that was held to determine the new women's champion ... **Tito Santana**, **Virgil**, & **Samu** beat **Jamal**, **Manu the Polynesian Warrior**, & **Gary Wolfe** by disqualification when Samu turned against Santana during the match; Santana and Virgil were declared the winners by disqualification. After the match, **Batista** ran in to help Santana and Virgil clear the ring ... Heavyweight champion **Afa Jr.** beat **Slyk Wagner Brown**. After the match, Afa Jr. declared that he was vacating the title in order to attend college in the fall ... Cruiserweight champion **Supreme Lee Great** beat **Don Crisis** ... **Jayson** won a triangle match over hardcore champion **Crazy Ivan** and **Boogaloo** to win the title ... **John Rambo** pinned **Chuckie Manson** ... **Cliff Compton** & **Jake Bishop** beat **Los Lunatics** to win the tag team championship ... **Homicide** pinned **Azrael** ... **Billy Dream** won a battle royal to become the new heavyweight champion.
(07-11-03)

—Timothy A. Walker

McKEESPORT—NWA East at the Sportatorium: **Justin Idol** and **Mad Mike** were declared co-winners of a battle royal ... **Crusher Hansen** defeated **J.B. Destiny** in a "street signs legal match" ... **Jazmynn Viktoria** defeated **Krystal Frost** ... **Brian Anthony** defeated **Brandon K** to win the vacant brass knuckles championship ... **Daron Smythe** defeated **Bigg** by disqualification ... **Paul Atlas** defeated **Scottie Gash** ... Heavyweight champion **Nikita Allanov** defeated **Justin Idol** and **Mad Mike**.
(07-19-03)

—Allan Winters

HERSHEY—WWE at the Giant Center: **Nidia** pinned **Torrie Wilson** (**Dawn Marie** was the guest referee) ... **Billy Kidman** & **Spanky** beat **Shannon Moore** & **Crash Holly** ... **Jamie Noble** pinned **Orlando Jordan** ... **John Cena** pinned **Billy Gunn** ... **Rhyno** & **Rikishi** defeated **Chuck Palumbo** & **Johnny Stamboli** ... Smackdown tag team champions **Eddie Guerrero** & **Tajiri** defeated **Sean O'Haire** & **A-Train** ... Cruiserweight champion **Rey Misterio Jr.** pinned **Matt Hardy** ... **Kurt Angle** & **Chris Benoit** beat **The Big Show**, **Shelton Benjamin**, & **Charlie Haas** in a handicap match.
(06-22-03)

—Rico Sheffield

RHODE ISLAND

PROVIDENCE—WWE at the Dunkin Donuts Center: **Shelton Benjamin** & **Charlie Haas** defeated **Chris Benoit** & **Rhyno** ... **Ultimo Dragon** pinned **Jamie Noble** ... **Bradshaw**, **Faarooq**, & **Spanky** beat **Chuck Palumbo**, **Johnny Stamboli**, & **Nunzio** ... **Torrie Wilson** beat **Nidia** and **Dawn Marie** in a bikini contest ... Cruiserweight champion **Rey Misterio Jr.** beat **Billy Kidman** ... **Billy Gunn** beat **Matt Hardy** ... Smackdown tag team champions **Eddie Guerrero** & **Tajiri** beat **A-Train** & **Sean O'Haire** ... **Kurt Angle** & **Brock Lesnar** beat **The Big Show** & **John Cena**.
(06-28-03)

—Liz Hunter

TENNESSEE

NASHVILLE—NWA-TNA pay-per-view at the Fairgrounds Coliseum: **Jerry Lynn** defeated **Elix Skipper** ... **The Sandman** beat **Edward Chastain** ... **Simon Diamond** & **Johnny Swinger** beat **Norman Smiley** & **Shark Boy** ... NWA-TNA X champion **Chris Sabin** defeated **Michael Shane** ... **Kid Kash** beat **Ricky Morton** ... **Shane Douglas**, **Brian Lee**, & **Slash** beat **Raven**, **Julio Dinero**, & **Alexis Laree** in a "Clockwork Orange House Of Fun" match ... **Jeff Jarrett** defeated **Legend** in a double pole match.
(07-30-03)

—Matt Brock

NASHVILLE—NWA-TNA pay-per-view at the Fairgrounds Coliseum: NWA heavyweight champion **A.J. Styles** pinned **D-Lo Brown** in the first match of their best-of-three series (pinfalls only) ... **Elix Skipper** pinned **Mad Mikey** (formerly **Crash Holly**) ... **Legend** defeated **Altar Boy Luke** and **Matt Sydal** in a three-way match ... **D-Lo Brown** defeated NWA heavyweight champion **A.J. Styles** in the second match of their best-of-three series (submissions only) ... NWA tag team champions **Chris Harris** & **James Storm** defeated **Simon Diamond** & **Johnny Swinger** by disqualification ... **Shane Douglas**, **Brian Lee**, & **Slash** beat **Julio Dinero**, **C.M. Punk**, & **Raven** ... NWA heavyweight champion **A.J. Styles** wrestled to a draw with **D-Lo Brown** in the third and deciding match of their best-of-three series (ladder match) when both grabbed the title belt and dropped from the top of the ladder to the mat at the same time, so Styles retained the title.
(07-23-03)

—Frank Miller

Beating Raven in a dog-collar match wasn't nearly enough for C.M. Punk on this night. He did that and took time to berate and mock his rival after tying him to the ropes.

NASHVILLE—NWA-TNA pay-per-view at the Fairgrounds Coliseum: **D-Lo Brown** pinned **Sonny Siaki** ... **Jerry Lynn** defeated **Justin Credible** in a last-man-standing match ... NWA-TNA X champion **Chris Sabin** defeated **Frankie Kazarian** by disqualification ... **Don** & **Ron Harris** beat **New Jack** & **Shark Boy** ... **Elix Skipper** pinned **Red** ... **Edward Chastain** pinned **Norman Smiley** ... **Legend** beat **Jeff Jarrett**.
(07-16-03)

—Frank Miller

NASHVILLE—NWA-TNA pay-per-view at the Fairgrounds Coliseum: NWA tag team champions **Chris Harris** & **James Storm** beat **Simon Diamond** & **Johnny Swinger** ... **Frankie Kazarian** beat **Kid Romeo**, **Delirious**, **Matt Sydal**, **Altar Boy Luke**, and **Matt Stryker** in a six-way elimination match to earn a shot at the NWA-TNA X title ... NWA-TNA X champion **Chris Sabin** beat **Frankie Kazarian** ... **Shane Douglas** pinned **Julio Dinero** ... **Don Harris** pinned **Shark Boy** ... **Kid Kash** defeated **Jerry Lynn** ... NWA heavyweight champion **A.J. Styles** pinned **D-Lo Brown**.
(07-09-03)

—Mindy McDermott

NASHVILLE—NWA-TNA pay-per-view at the Fairgrounds Coliseum: **Shane Douglas** pinned **C.M. Punk** in a "Clockwork Orange House Of Fun" match ... NWA tag team champions **Chris Harris** & **James Storm** beat **Sonny Siaki** & **David Young** ... **Abyss** pinned **Erik Watts** ... **Jerry Lynn** defeated **Justin Credible** in a chain match ... **Shark Boy** pinned **Mike Sanders** ... **The Sandman** beat **New Jack** in the finals of the Hard 10 Tournament ... NWA heavyweight champion **A.J. Styles** pinned **Frankie Kazarian**.
(07-02-03)

—George Cranston

NASHVILLE—NWA-TNA pay-per-view at the Fairgrounds Coliseum: **Chris Harris** & **James Storm** defeated NWA tag team champions **Christopher Daniels** & **Elix Skipper** in a steel cage match to win the title ... **D-Lo Brown** beat NWA heavyweight champion **A.J. Styles** by disqualification in an impromptu steel cage match when **Vince Russo** interfered ... **Jerry Lynn** pinned **Justin Credible** in a lights-out match ... **Frankie Kazarian** pinned NWA-TNA X champion **Chris Sabin** in a non-title match ... **Kid Kash** pinned **Erik Watts** ... **The Sandman** defeated **Sonny Siaki** in a Hard 10 Tournament match ... **Jeff Jarrett** & **Raven** defeated **Shane Douglas** & **Glenn Gilberti** by disqualification.
(06-25-03)

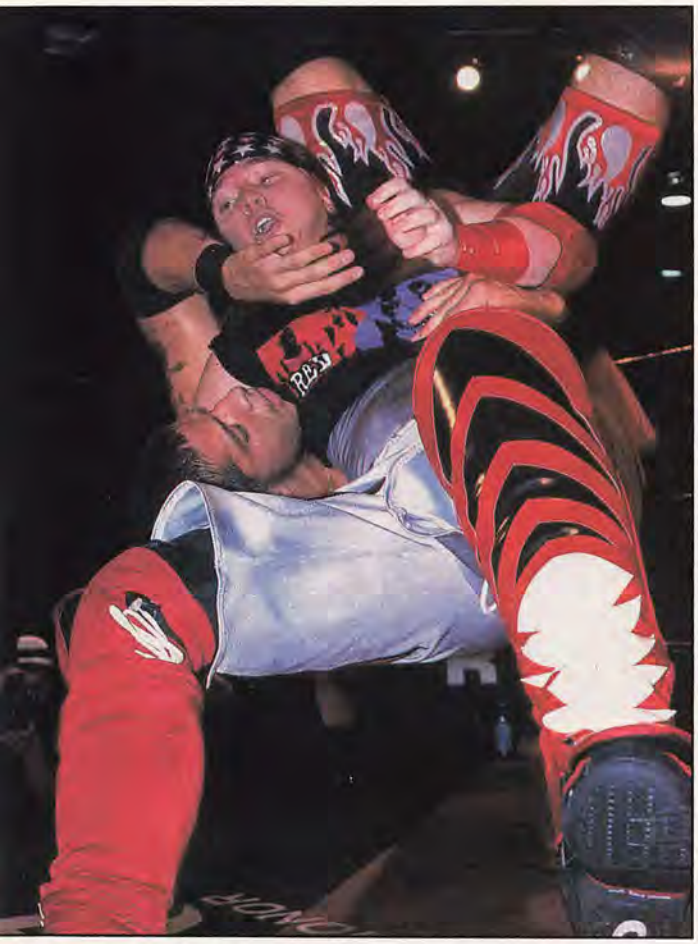
—Frank Miller

CLEVELAND—All American Wrestling at the National Guard Armory: **Chad** & **Jason Dobbins** beat **Kenny Arden** & **Darrell Fargo** ... **Jim Powell** & **Bambi** beat **Palm Beach Boy Scotty** ... **Scotty Riggs** defeated **Henry Hoss** ... **Sonny Siaki** beat **Damian** ... **Glacier** defeated **Erik Watts**.
(07-26-03)

—Austin Pullin

CLEVELAND—NAWA at the National Guard Armory: **Jimmy Powell** defeated **Lee Thomas** ... **The Palm Beach Boys** beat **Dru Delight** & **Ray Gordy** ... **Bambi** beat **Peggy Lee Leather** and **Storm** in a three-way match ... **Clay** & **Jason Dobbins** beat **John** & **Kenny Arden** ... **Henry Hoss**, **Jimmy Powell**, & **The Bullet** beat **Southside Trash** ... **Erik Watts** beat **B.G. James**.
(06-28-03)

—Austin Pullin



Would we be exaggerating if we called Amazing Red's performance against Mark and Jay Briscoe amazing? Not really. He and A.J. Styles retained their ROH tag belts.

GALLATIN—Middle Tennessee Wrestling Association at the Wal-Mart parking lot: **Ryan Jefferies** beat **Shawn Sensation** ... **J.B. Thunder** & **Apollo** beat **Jail Break** & **The Convict** ... **Trent Richards** defeated **All Star** and **Hardrock Higdon** in a three-way match to become the new cruiserweight champion ... **Mike Promo** & **Robert Mulligan** beat **Dirty White Boy** & **Big Daddy Kane** by disqualification ... **Wildman** pinned **John Matrix** to become the new heavyweight champion.
(07-26-03)

—Sean Travis

MARYVILLE—Premiere Wrestling Alliance at the National Guard Armory: **Loco** pinned **Shawn Shultz** ... **Scott Bishop** defeated **Overkill** by submission ... **Shane Williams** pinned ironman champion **Jason Maxx** to win the title ... **Ryan Phoenix** pinned **Suit-O Maximo** ... **Team Old School** won a three-way dance against **Pretty Evil** and **Tim Baldwin** & **Thorne** to win the tag title ... Heavyweight champ **Robbie Race** defeated **Menace** and **David Young**.
(07-26-03)

—Brad Dawber

ELIZABETHTON—Liberty Championship Wrestling at the Central Elementary School: **Scott Sterling** defeated **Alabama Al** ... **Jeff Storm** pinned **Ricki Rockett** ... **E.Z. Money** and **Bryan Wayne** wrestled to a 10-minute draw for the vacant TV title ... Heavyweight champ **Wade Adams** defeated **Thunderdrag II** ... **Allen King** defeated **Eddie Golden** in a loser-leaves-LCW-for-90 days match ... **Bryan Wayne** & **Scott Sterling** defeated **C.J. Stone** & **Brady Hawkes** ... Heavyweight champ **Wade Adams** defeated **Jeff Storm** ... **Livewire Landell** pinned **Blackheart** ... **E.Z. Money** & **Buck Golden** defeated **Allen King** & **Bryan Wayne**.
(07-19-03)

—Brian Smith

TEXAS

ARLINGTON—Professional Championship Wrestling at the PCW Arena: **B.J. Cummings** beat light heavyweight champion **Steve DeMarco** by disqualification ... **Gabe Roach** beat **Adrian** ... **Mike Foxx** beat **Justin 2 Fine** ... Tag team champs **Apocalypse** & **Tim Storm** beat **Cedric Crain** & **Scott Putski** ... ***FWS Tournament final:*** **Shadow** beat **Jared Steele** in a best-of-three-falls match to win the tournament and the heavyweight belt.
(07-26-03)

—Rob Moore

GREENVILLE—Southwest Premier Wrestling at the National Guard Armory: **The Flying Jobber** pinned **Adam Arson** ... **Khan** pinned **Sean Cordova** ... **Hallowmass Joseph** pinned **Bobby 2 Badd** ... Heavyweight champion **Gemini** defeated **L.A. Steele** ... Tag team champions **The New Legacy** defeated **The Professionals**.
(07-26-03)

—Marion Morrison

ROCKWALL—Christian Wrestling Federation at the Rock Gym: **Ricky Jackson** defeated **Mace** ... **Larry Green** pinned light heavyweight champion **Wes Word** in a non-title match ... **Mace** & **The Great Ryu** defeated **Ricky Jackson** & **Chris Idol** ... **Shiloh** beat **Chris Young**.
(07-26-03)

—Travis McKeon

DENTON—Xtreme Championship Wrestling at the XCW Arena: **Mike Thunder** pinned **Punisher** ... **Eric Idol** won a three-way match against **Cyclone** and **Dave the Rave** ... **Bull** pinned TV champ **John Allen** in a non-title match ... Ironman champ **Gemini** pinned **Epi the Phat Samoan** ... Tag team champs **Kit Carson** & **Khris Germany** beat **Drunk Adam** & **Scott Phoenix**.
(07-25-03)

—Rob Moore

JACKSBORO—Texas Outlaw Promotions second annual "Jim Wigington Memorial Show" at the Middle School: Cruiserweight champion **John Solo** defeated **Mace** ... **Ricky the Ref** beat **Jerry the Ref** in a grudge match ... **Max Muscles** pinned **Carson Street** ... **Keats Douglas** pinned **Chuck Murphy** ... **Kyzer Douglas** beat **The Natural** in a lumberjack match ... **Ricky Jackson** pinned **Doink the Clown** ... **Wade Walker** defeated Texas champion **J.P.** in a dog-collar ladder match to win the title.
(07-19-03)

—Travis McKeon

AUSTIN—Southwest Wrestling Federation at the SWWF Arena: **Slam Shady** beat **Scott Summers** ... **Great Mombassa** wrestled **Ace Cage** to a double-countout ... **Hurricane Hector** defeated **Massive** ... **Jade** defeated **Killer Katie Cox** ... **Darin** & **Kris Childs** won a triangle TLC match against **Enigma** & **Seth Shai** and **Joker** & **Jimmy Tesla** to become the new tag team champions ... Heavyweight champion **Mr. Taylor** defeated **Johnny Grunge** ... **Jerry Lynn** defeated **Kid Kash**.
(07-12-03)

—Ronnie Ernesto

CORSICANA—All Star Pro Wrestling at the National Guard Armory: **Keats Douglas** defeated **Wade Walker** by disqualification ... **Chuck Murphy** pinned **Darin Childs** to win the light heavyweight title ... Tag team champions **Cody Knight** & **Brett Barnes** defeated **Kris Childs** & **Enigma** ... **Kyzer Douglas** won a six-man battle royal ... **Ricky Jackson** beat heavyweight champion **Seth Shai** to win the title.
(06-28-03)

—Brandy Crim

UTAH

SALT LAKE CITY—WWE at the E Center: Raw tag team champions **Rene Dupree** & **Sylvan Grenier** beat **Buh Buh Ray** & **D-Von Dudley** ... **Randy Orton** pinned **The Hurricane** ... **Mark Jindrak** & **Maven** defeated **Steven Richards** & **Lance Storm** ... **Scott Steiner** pinned **Test** ... **Gail Kim** & **Trish Stratus** beat **Molly Holly** & **Victoria** ... **Rosey** pinned **Rodney Mack** ... Intercontinental champion **Booker T** pinned **Christian** ... Raw champion **Triple-H** beat **Kevin Nash** in a streetfight.
(07-19-03)

—Ron Corbett

VIRGINIA

RICHMOND—GWA at the Hotchkiss Community Center: **Dragan Frost** defeated **Chris Draiman** ... **Grail** defeated **Quickstyle** to become the first U.S. champion ... **Donovan Torrez** defeated **Pete Jannings** ... **Dustin Daniels** defeated **Logan Knight** ... **Tone-Up** defeated **Billy the Kid** ... **Casey J. Austin** defeated **Kiley McLean** by disqualification (07-25-03)

—Larry Horsley

RICHMOND—UCW at the Bottom Line: **Damion Wylde** beat **Frank Savage** ... **Brock Singleton** defeated **Shorty Smalls** ... **Grail** defeated **Mike Lynn** ... Heavyweight champion **Fatty McNasty** defeated **Damion Wylde** in a hardcore match ... **Brock Singleton** defeated **Fatty McNasty** to win the heavyweight title ... Intergender champion **Humphrey J. Dupont IV** beat **Casey J. Austin**.
(07-24-03)

—Larry Horsley

WISCONSIN

GREEN BAY—WWE at the Resch Center: Raw tag team champions **Rene Dupree** & **Sylvan Grenier** beat **Buh Buh Ray** & **D-Von Dudley** ... **Mark Jindrak** beat **Rico** ... **Randy Orton** & **Lance Storm** defeated **Garrison Cade** & **Maven** ... Women's champion **Gail Kim** beat **Molly Holly** and **Trish Stratus** in a three-way match ... **Scott Steiner** pinned **Test** ... **Rodney Mack**

& **Christopher Nowinski** beat **Tommy Dreamer** & **Rosey** ... Intercontinental champion **Booker T** beat **Christian** ... **Ric Flair** & **Kane** defeated **Kevin Nash** & **Rob Van Dam**.
(07-12-03)

—Nelson Charles

INTERNATIONAL

CANADA

CALGARY, ALBERTA—Stampede Wrestling at the Bowness Sportsplex: ***North American heavyweight title tournament, round two:*** **Karnage** defeated **Eddy Mustang** ... **Duke Durrango** beat **Kid Nicholls** ... **Teddy Hart** defeated **T.J. Wilson** by countout ... **Harry Smith** beat **Johnny Devine** ... ***In non-tournament action:*** **Marky Starr** and **Apocalypse** wrestled to a draw ... **Kirk Melnyk** beat **Randy Myers** ... **Dean Durrango** beat **Jason Priestly** ... **Naddie Neidhart** defeated **Bell Lovitz**.
(07-25-03)

—Steven Hawkes

SURREY, BRITISH COLUMBIA—ECCW/NWA Pacific Northwest at the Bridgeview Community Hall: NWA Canadian junior heavyweight champion **Major Hardway** defeated **Matt Classic** ... **Nikki French** & **The Amazing Halo** beat **Avalon** & **Adam Firestorm** ... **Rocky Della Serra** defeated **Ladies Choice** by disqualification ... Hardcore champion **Dropkick Murphy** pinned **Moondog Manson** ... **Todd Baumgartner** pinned **Seth Knight** ... **Rico Quiones** beat **Cole Bishop** ... **Vance Nevada** beat NWA Pacific Northwest champion **Scotty Mac** by disqualification.
(07-25-03)

—Nathan Maylor

OLDCASTLE, ONTARIO—Border City Wrestling at the Ciociaro Club: **John E. Bravo** defeated **Kris Chambers** ... **Larry Destiny** & **Joe E. Legend** defeated **Bobby Rude** & **Ruffy Silverstein** ... **Dyson Pryce** defeated **Big Chuck Wagon** ... **Scott D'Amore**, **Mickey Doyle**, & **Bobby Clancy** defeated **Cyrus**, **Denny Kaas**, & **Chris Pillon** ... **Alex Shelly** defeated **Petey Williams** ... Tag team champs **Gutter** & **The Hacker** defeated **Tyson Dux** & **El Tornado** ... TV champ **Chris Sabin** defeated **Eric Young** ... Heavyweight champ **D-Lo Brown** won a three-way dance against **Johnny Swinger** and **Shane Douglas**.
(07-24-03)

—Matt Fletcher

WINNIPEG, MANITOBA—Premier Championship Wrestling at the PCW Stratosphere: **Shawn Houston** defeated **Ron Chee** ... **Antonio Scorpio** beat **The Gigolo** ... **Darren Dalton** pinned **Pete Chee** ... **John Cutler** defeated **Adam Knight** by disqualification ... **Chris Stevens** & **Ronnie Attitude** defeated **Perfect Balance** to win the tag title ... **Kenny Omega** pinned **Robby Royce**.
(07-24-03)

—Stan Saxon

CHARLOTTETOWN, PRINCE EDWARD ISLAND—WWE at the Civic Centre: **The Hurricane** pinned **Steven Richards** ... **Val Venis** wrestled to a 10-minute time-limit draw with **Randy Orton** ... **Tommy Dreamer** pinned **Rosey** ... Women's champion **Gail Kim** beat **Ivory** and **Victoria** in a three-way match ... **Rob Van Dam** pinned **Test** ... Intercontinental champion **Christian** pinned **Booker T** ... **Maven** pinned **Rico** ... Raw tag team champions **Rene Dupree** & **Sylvan Grenier** beat **Buh Buh Ray** & **Spike Dudley**.
(07-06-03)

—Dutch Krewda

ST. JOHN, NEW BRUNSWICK—WWE at Harbour Station: **The Hurricane** pinned **Steven Richards** ... **Randy Orton** wrestled **Val Venis** to a 10-minute time-limit draw ... **Tommy Dreamer** pinned **Rosey** ... Women's champion **Gail Kim** beat **Ivory** and **Victoria** in a three-way match ... **Rob Van Dam** pinned **Test** ... Intercontinental champion **Christian** pinned **Booker T** ... **Maven** pinned **Rico** ... Raw tag team champions **Rene Dupree** & **Sylvan Grenier** beat **Buh Buh Ray** & **Spike Dudley**.
(07-05-03)

—Aaron Harding

LONDON, ONTARIO—WWE at the John Labatt Centre: **Randy Orton** beat **Val Venis** ... **Maven** pinned **Rico** ... **Tommy Dreamer** defeated **Rosey** ... Women's champion **Gail Kim** beat **Victoria** and **Ivory** in a three-way match ... Raw tag team champions **Rene Dupree** & **Sylvan Grenier** beat **Buh Buh Ray** & **Spike Dudley** ... Intercontinental champion **Christian** beat **Booker T** ... **The Hurricane** beat **Steven Richards** ... **Rob Van Dam** pinned **Test**.
(07-04-03)

—Aaron Harding

JAPAN

KOBE—WWE at World Memorial Hall: **Funaki** pinned **Matt Hardy** ... **Sean O'Haire** pinned **Spanky** ... **A-Train** pinned **Billy Gunn** ... **Ultimo Dragon** pinned **Billy Kidman** ... Smackdown tag team champions **Shelton Benjamin** & **Charlie Haas** beat **Rhyno** & **Tajiri** ... Cruiserweight champion **Rey Misterio Jr.** beat **Jamie Noble** ... **Kurt Angle**, **Chris Benoit**, & **Brock Lesnar** defeated **The Big Show**, **Eddie Guerrero**, & **John Cena**.
(07-19-03)

—Koichi Yoshizawa

YOKOHAMA—WWE at Yokohama Arena: **Billy Kidman** pinned **Spanky** ... **Billy Gunn** & **Torrie Wilson** defeated **Jamie Noble** & **Nidia** ... **Matt Hardy** pinned **Funaki** ... **Rhyno** pinned **Sean O'Haire** ... **Chris Benoit** defeated **A-Train** ... Smackdown tag team champions **Shelton Benjamin** & **Charlie Haas** beat **Rey Misterio Jr.** & **Ultimo Dragon** ... **Kurt Angle** & **Tajiri** beat **John Cena** & **Eddie Guerrero** ... Smackdown champion **Brock Lesnar** pinned **The Big Show**.
(07-18-03)

—Koichi Yoshizawa

YOKOHAMA—WWE at Yokohama Arena: **Matt Hardy** defeated **Spanky** ... **Sable** beat **Torrie Wilson**, **Dawn Marie**, and **Nidia** in a bikini challenge ... **Ultimo Dragon** beat **Jamie Noble** ... **Funaki** pinned **A-Train** ... **John Cena** defeated **Billy Gunn** ... Cruiserweight champion **Rey Misterio Jr.** beat **Billy Kidman** ... Smackdown tag team champions **Shelton Benjamin** & **Charlie Haas** beat **Chris Benoit** & **Rhyno** ... **Eddie Guerrero** beat **Tajiri** ... Smackdown champion **Brock Lesnar** defeated **Kurt Angle** and **The Big Show** in a three-way match.
(07-17-03)

—Koichi Yoshizawa

THAILAND

BANGKOK—WWE at Impact Arena: **Ultimo Dragon** defeated **Jamie Noble** ... **Billy Gunn** pinned **Sean O'Haire** ... **Torrie Wilson** beat **Sable**, **Nidia**, and **Dawn Marie** in a bikini challenge ... **A-Train** pinned **Spanky** ... **Chris Benoit** & **Rhyno** defeated **Matt Hardy** & **Billy Kidman** ... Cruiserweight champion **Rey Misterio Jr.** pinned **John Cena** ... Smackdown tag team champions **Shelton Benjamin** & **Charlie Haas** beat **Eddie Guerrero** & **Tajiri** ... Smackdown champion **Brock Lesnar** beat **The Big Show** and **Kurt Angle** in a three-way match.
(07-16-03)

—John Harvey

Paul London's final ROH match was emotional and intense, but London fans were disappointed (if not surprised) when ROH champ Samoa Joe choked him out in the main event.

PWI classic

From the October 1995 issue of *The Wrestler*

The first woman ever to crash the annual list of the world's top wrestlers is trying to reserve a spot this year by wrestling a wimpy manager—but that's not enough in the eyes of the ratings committee

Hey, Miss Texas:

IF YOU WANNA BE IN THE "*PWI* 500," WRESTLE A MAN—NOT HARVEY WIPPLEMAN!

By Chris Bernucca

FOR MANY YEARS, women's wrestling has gotten about as much respect as ... well, most women's sports.

The last few years, however, were breakthrough years for women's wrestling. A pair of Japanese promotions pulled off a marathon six-hour card that featured some of the best women wrestlers and matches of all-time. The WWF reinstated its women's division in late-1993, and Alundra Blayze became its champion, backing up her words with incredible skills in the ring and reigning as champion for nearly one year.

But those two strides were nothing compared to the leap made by Miss Texas. Previously a sideshow in the often-madcap world of the USWA, Miss Texas became the first woman to crash the highly regarded *"PWI* 500." She did it in 1993, earning her spot (number 483, to be precise) by actually beating a man in the ring. The victim was Jamie Dundee (a.k.a. J.C. Ice of PG-13)—nothing more than a mid-card singles competitor in the Memphis-based promotion at the time, but a man nonetheless.

Now Miss Texas is at it again—or so she thinks. In several USWA tag team matches, Miss Texas has teamed with Sweet Georgia Brown to defeat Uptown Karen and Down-

We didn't want to call Miss Texas' victories over Harvey "Downtown Bruno" Wippleman easy, but they weren't nearly impressive enough to earn her a spot in the "*PWI* 500" in 1995.

town Bruno (a.k.a. Harvey Wippleman). The victories have come with Miss Texas pinning Wippleman. She has also pinned him in singles competition. And in a few forgettable "loser-eats-dog-food" matches.

"That proves last time was no fluke," Miss Texas shouted to no one in particular after the first of those tag team wins. "I beat a man in 1993, and I beat a man this year. And if that's what it takes to get back in the '*PWI* 500,' I'll beat a man *every* year from now on."

Miss Texas talks a tough game, and we certainly don't doubt her ability or resolve. However, we do have some questions about the level of her competition. A person doesn't become a chef just by walking into a kitchen, and a Wippleman certainly doesn't become a wrestler just by putting on a pair of tights and stepping into the ring. There are about two dozen female wrestlers who would pose a tougher test for Miss Texas, including Uptown Karen, who is no Fabulous Moolah.

"Yeah, it's embarrassing to lose to her," Wippleman said. "But think how embarrassing it would be if she lost to me. She'd have to quit and go back to sweeping floors or something."

"Sometimes I wish Bruno would just get out of the way and let me wrestle Miss Texas," Uptown Karen offered. "Then everyone would get a chance to see that I'm the best women's wrestler in the USWA. She's been living off that victory over Dundee for two years now. Now she's gonna try to get the same mileage out of beating my manager? Who else has she really beaten?"

That's a good question, and the answer to it isn't lost on Dundee.

"I'm going to have to live with that loss for the rest of my life, because I'm never going to get a rematch," said Dundee, who has captured his fair share of USWA tag titles. "But she's too smart to give me a rematch now, because she knows she'll get killed, then she'll be just be another women's wrestler. This way, she's always gonna be the woman who beat a man, and I'm always gonna be the guy who lost to a woman."

Recently, Miss Texas has had better success against Wippleman than she has in most of her matches. This battle of the sexes started in April, when Wippleman interfered on Karen's behalf, costing Miss Texas a victory. Throughout her career, though, Miss Texas has never been more than an above-average competitor, both winning and losing her fair share of matches.

"Before she starts going after

Miss Texas made history in 1993 by becoming the first woman ever to crack the "500"—by virtue of her win over Jamie Dundee. That loss haunted Dundee for a while.

Ratings

October 1995

Mabel

TOP 10
1. Sting
2. Bret Hart
3. Mabel
4. Ric Flair
5. Savio Vega
6. Shawn Michaels
7. Hulk Hogan
8. Jeff Jarrett
9. Diesel
10. Randy Savage

TAG TEAMS
1. Owen Hart & Yokozuna
2. Bunkhouse Buck & Dick Slater
3. Lex Luger & Davey Boy Smith
4. Harlem Heat
5. The Nasty Boys
6. The Rock 'n' Roll Express
7. Public Enemy
8. Al Snow & Unibomb
9. PG-13
10. Bobby Eaton & Lord Steven Regal

WCW
World champion: Hulk Hogan
1. Sting
2. Big Van Vader
3. Randy Savage
4. Ric Flair
5. The Renegade
6. Alex Wright
7. Meng
8. Arn Anderson
9. Paul Orndorff
10. Brian Pillman

WWF
World champion: Diesel
1. Jeff Jarrett
2. Mabel
3. Bret Hart
4. Savio Vega
5. Shawn Michaels
6. The Undertaker
7. Sid Vicious
8. Bam Bam Bigelow
9. Razor Ramon
10. Bob Holly

ECW
Heavyweight champion: The Sandman
1. Cactus Jack
2. Tasmaniac
3. Eddie Guerrero
4. Tommy Dreamer
5. 911
6. Shane Douglas
7. Dean Malenko
8. 2 Cold Scorpio
9. Mikey Whipwreck
10. Vampire Warrior

MOST POPULAR
1. Shawn Michaels
2. Hulk Hogan
3. Sting
4. Diesel
5. Bret Hart
6. The Undertaker
7. Razor Ramon
8. Bam Bam Bigelow
9. Randy Savage
10. Lex Luger

MOST HATED
1. Sid Vicious
2. Ric Flair
3. Bob Backlund
4. Jerry Lawler
5. Jeff Jarrett
6. Mabel
7. Hakushi
8. Kama
9. Arn Anderson
10. Bubba Rogers

The USWA's fieriest female wasn't afraid to kick Wippleman where it hurt the most if he insulted her (above). And although she enjoyed humiliating him in the ring (opposite page), she said she was ready for tougher competition.

men, she should go after the best women wrestlers," Razor Ramon said at a recent USWA card. "I've seen Alundra Blayze in action, man, and Miss Texas would be lucky to last five minutes with her. I remember Blayze from the AWA, too, man.

She's a tough cookie, maybe the best women's wrestler in the world. But even Alundra Blayze isn't tough enough—or loco enough, chico—to go after men."

Miss Texas disagrees.

"The WWF men come down here to Memphis for matches all the time," she said. "How come Alundra Blayze never comes down here to wrestle me or Georgia or even Karen? Because she's scared, that's why. She knows that Miss Texas beats men in the ring; that's something she'll never do.

"If I don't get the chance to wrestle against the best women, I don't have any choice but to take it to the next step, and that's wrestling against men. I know I'm risking a lot. I know I can get hurt. But if that's the way to get national attention and another spot in that *'PWI* 500,' then that's what I have to do."

The USWA, which initially took a lot of heat for scheduling the match between Miss Texas and Dundee but was later viewed as a groundbreaker, says it doesn't have any plans to schedule Miss Texas against anyone other than Uptown Karen, Wippleman, or women like Brown or Susan Sapphire. That means Miss Texas will probably not have the win or wins necessary to get back into the *"PWI* 500."

"We don't view Wippleman as near-

Other USWA lightweights, including manager/wrestler Brandon Baxter, also found out what happens when you cross Miss Texas.

ly the quality of opponent that we do Dundee," *PWI* Publisher Stu Saks said. "Wippleman wasn't in the *'PWI* 500' last year, and he won't be in it this year. The *'PWI* 500' is for wrestlers who wrestle other wrestlers."

Unless Miss Texas wrestles someone of comparable talent to Dundee—someone such as Tommy Rich, David Haskins, or Gorgeous George III—she will most surely drop out of this year's *"PWI* 500," which is exactly where all other women wrestlers currently reside. □

By the time we reached the year 2000, Miss Texas was known as Jacquelyn, and she was a WWF veteran. She (along with Ivory) enjoyed beating on a chauvinistic Dean Malenko.

The Wrestler, October 1995

The cover: President Bob Backlund? Was the former WWF World champion serious about running for the highest office in the land in 1996? Well, he never was an official candidate, but his rants about what he would do as President made us think he was. Aside from the ridiculous image we placed on the cover, we took him seriously, so much so that we summarized his views on issues ranging from crime to condoms in schools, and even suggested a running mate (Sting!).

Hollywood Blonds, Take Two: Steve Austin and Brian Pillman, collectively known as The Hollywood Blonds, were one of the hottest tag teams in the world in the early-1990s, but they didn't stay together long. An ugly feud ensued once they split up. We suggested that in the middle of 1995, with both men seemingly lacking direction, focus, and purpose in WCW, they needed to reunite to spark their careers. Both seemed receptive to the possibility, but it never happened. Austin would find another way to spark his career.

Better Off On Foreign Soil: With Rick and Scott Steiner having spent the better part of two years wrestling part-time in Japan (and very rarely in the U.S.), so many fans were waiting for the day on which they would return to the States, especially given the sorry condition of tag team wrestling. So we advised them to stay away. Unrealistic fan expectations and an assertion that WCW and WWF teams weren't really so bad after all were our main reasons. They would, incidentally, return within a few months.

Mysteries Of Muta: Paul Orndorff thought he had The Great Muta (Keiji Muto) scouted as well as any opponent he had ever wrestled. He studied Japanese videotapes for hours on end just so that he would be ready for Muta's marvelous aerial attack. So when it came time for their match at WCW's Slamboree, he was sure he was ready. Then Muta proceeded to dominate him and beat him with a ground attack for which he was in no way prepared. "Who was that man?" Orndorff asked afterward.

Sitting Down With "The Dean": Legendary wrestling broadcaster Gordon Solie was gracious enough to give us a few minutes of his time shortly after he was inducted into the WCW Hall of Fame (which was a total surprise to him). He offered his thoughts on the WCW-WWF war, the proliferation of wrestling pay-per-views, Hulk Hogan's arrival in WCW, some of his favorite people to interview, the top young stars in the sport at the time, and a lot more.

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SOUTHERN CHAMPION LEX LUGAR: "I'LL RUN BARRY WINDHAM BACK TO THE WWF!"
SPORTS REVIEW
Wrestling
1983 ANNUAL
Killer Brooks, Larry Zbyszko, & Buzz Sawyer:
DID RIC FLAIR ORDER THIS HIT SQUAD TO ATTACK TONY ATLAS?
Victory Sports Series
Wrestling
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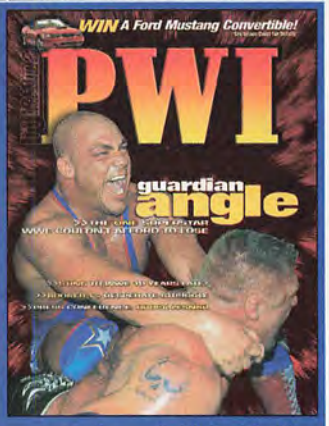
between falls

PRO WRESTLING ILLUSTRATED welcomes readers' comments on any of our stories or columns. Send letters to: BETWEEN FALLS Box 1148, Ft. Washington, PA 19034
Or you can e-mail your comments to prowrestlingillustrated@yahoo.com
Letters preceded by a ☎ indicate letters left by fans on the *PWI* Hotline (1-900-226-4PWI; see ad elsewhere in this issue).

TOUCHED BY AN ANGLE



Kurt Angle was scheduled to defend his newly won WWE Smackdown title against Brock Lesnar at SummerSlam and, because of that development, our cover story in the September 2003 issue ("Guardian Angle: The One Superstar WWE Couldn't Afford To Lose") takes on special relevance. If Angle had been forced to retire immediately following WrestleMania XIX, what would be the status of SummerSlam, or of WWE? Our readers' comments provided some insight.

"Smackdown gets a lot of credit for its cruiserweight division, but I think the heavyweight ranks are kind of weak," noted Dana Carter of Palm Springs, California. "Would we be treated to a Brock Lesnar-Big Show steel cage match, or what?"

Julie Dryer of Upper Marlboro, Maryland, disagreed. "Bruno Sammartino came and left. So did Hulk Hogan, Bret Hart, Steve Austin, and The Rock. Why does everyone panic? No one is irreplaceable, although I'm glad Kurt Angle is healthy again."

"Everybody's looking for the next wrestling boom, and usually one wrestler is the catalyst," wrote John Ritken of Charlottesville, Virginia. "Kurt Angle as a fan favorite in the right storyline could do that. That's why WWE can't afford to lose him."

IS HHH RUINING THE GAME?

One word describes just about all the WWE Raw title matches I've seen so far: boring! I know Triple-H has proven to be one of the greatest wrestlers of all-time, but he depends on Evolution too much to bring down his opponents. Either that, or he disqualifies himself to retain the title.

Steve Austin and Eric Bischoff should strip Triple-H of the title and put it up for grabs in a tournament involving 16 of Raw's most talented superstars. They should include Booker T, Chris Jericho, Goldberg, Kane, Kevin Nash, RVD, Rodney Mack, Scott Steiner, Shawn Michaels, Test, The Hurricane, Triple-H, The Rock (if he has the time), and Steve Austin (if he feels capable of wrestling).

Every WWE fan would be happy to have a different Raw champion. It would be a refreshing change. If nothing else, Triple-H should be forced into having a fair match. Come on, Austin and Bischoff, ban everyone from ringside or declare that the title can change hands on a disqualification or countout. That way, we could find out if Triple-H is really a worthy champion.

ERVIN HU
Edmonton, Alberta

MILITARY MAN'S WWE

Because I am deployed in Kuwait right now, I wasn't able to read the March 2003 issue of *PWI* until recently. I hope it isn't too late to comment on Dave Lenker's "In Focus" column in which he described how he would construct his own WWE. He had a good vision of how WWE could improve its overall product. I have some similar ideas.

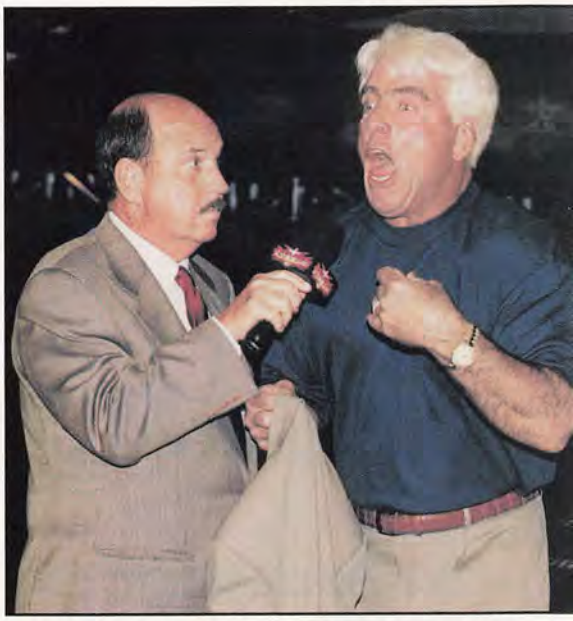
My WWE would have a greater emphasis on the top 10 ratings of each brand. More wrestlers would receive title shots, yet the number would be directly based on their individual rankings. Also, I would adopt *PWI's* old policy that the I-C and U.S. champions would become automatic top contenders to their respective champions.

My WWE would feature more women. I think the current divas are lovely, but I'm getting tired of the women's title being tossed around among Trish Stratus, Jazz, Victoria, and Molly Holly.

My WWE would feature Gene Okerlund conducting interviews in the center ring. His interviews with Ric Flair on *WCW Monday Nitro* were classics.

Finally, my WWE would have general managers, although I would not hire my daughter or anyone who tried to put me out of business. I think wrestlers should have more of the spotlight. If only Dave Lenker or I could run WWE!

SPC. BRIAN THOMAS
Newport News, VA



Gene Okerlund would be given a role as an interviewer on *Raw* and could then have more memorable exchanges with Ric Flair if reader Brian Thomas ran WWE.

LESNAR OFF THE MARK

While reading the "Press Conference" with Brock Lesnar in the September '03 issue, I was annoyed that Lesnar said the Smackdown roster is "as good or better than the WWE of the early-'90s, the '80s, or of WCW at any point."

First of all, most of the Smackdown roster is made up of ex-WCW talent, including Chris Benoit and Big Show, both former WCW World champions. Plus, there are former WCW cruiserweight champions such as Rey Misterio Jr., Billy Kidman, Eddie Guerrero, and Chavo Guerrero Jr. How about former WCW World tag team champions Sean O'Haire and Chuck Palumbo? Or former WCW U.S. champion Bill DeMott? Keep in mind The Undertaker, Rikishi, Johnny Stamboli, Jamie Noble, and Shannon Moore all competed in WCW at some point.

Also, Brock, even though the Smackdown roster is far superior to Raw's, it is in no way better than the WWF of the 1980s or 1990s.

I just wanted to set the record straight.

GERARD BOWES
Dublin, Ireland

NEED MORE DINSMORE!

Now that Smackdown has the best technical wrestlers in WWE, including Chris Benoit, Kurt Angle, and Eddie Guerrero, I don't understand why the company doesn't promote Nick Dinsmore from Ohio Valley. To me, *he* is the third incarnation of Mr. Wrestling, not Vince Russo or even Nikita Koloff! He would be great as part of a tag team as well, either with his old Lords of the Ring partner, Rob Conway, or with Chris Benoit.

The Smackdown brand would get a nice little boost if GM Stephanie McMahon decided to promote Nick Dinsmore from OVW, writes Nathan Davis.

And, Stephanie McMahon, after you promote Dinsmore, go ahead and sign A.J. Styles, Christopher Daniels, and Low-Ki. At that point, there would be nothing Steve Austin or Eric Bischoff could do to help Raw catch up to Smackdown.

NATHAN DAVIS
Fort Wayne, IN

THE BARON LIVES

I want to give a cheer for Harry Burkett's column ("Win, Lose, Or Draw," September 2003) and the accompanying photo of the late, great Baron Michele Leone. Mr. Burkett discussed how he feared that past superstars like Leone would fade away over time, and they would eventually be forgotten.

Don't worry. There are many old-time fans who truly do remember Leone and Lou Thesz setting the all-time gate and attendance records in California. Moreover, there are plenty who remember Leone waging war with Gorgeous George, Lord James Blears, Gene Kiniski, Fred Blassie, and many more greats during his career.

Have faith in the lasting accomplishments of these legends.

MIKE LANO
Alameda, CA

[Editor's note: The writer is a contributing photographer for ***PWI.****]*

PWI Hotline Extra!

Your answers to our question of the week!

Question of the Week: Are you glad to see Shane McMahon back on WWE TV? (July 29 to August 4, 2003)

Hotline callers respond: "Do we have to see another McMahon on TV every week?" asked Jason Lendowski of Lynn, Massachusetts. "I was hoping that either *Raw* or *Smackdown* would be a McMahon-free zone. I have nothing personal against this family, but isn't this overkill?"

Amy Sukkar of Bear, Delaware is glad to see Shane on *Raw*. "I think it's very touching that he came back to defend the honor of his mom. It is Kane, not Shane, who should be afraid. Shane is going to wear out 'The Big Red Machine' with that kendo stick."

"I know what's coming," noted Kevin Euby of Bossier City, Louisiana. "Linda McMahon is already dissatisfied with Eric Bischoff and Steve Austin as GMs, and Shane will replace them. Then it will be Shane vs. Stephanie again. How original!"

HEY, WHAT ABOUT THE AWA?

I have been a fan of your magazine since 1986, so, after all of these years, I thought I'd finally drop you guys a line and thank you for the good work. But, as a long-time reader, I also have a personal request. For your future *"PWI* Classic" reprints, could you please run a story about The Midnight Rockers, The Road Warriors, or some other AWA tag team of that era? I love to reminisce about the good ol' days, especially my favorite wrestling promotion.

KEITH LINDSEY
Keefus_75@yahoo.com □

PWI official ratings

For period ended August 8, 2003

TOP 10

1 KURT ANGLE
233, Pittsburgh, PA
(–) WWE Smackdown champion

2 YOSHIHIRO TAKAYAMA
270, Sapporo, Japan
(9) IWGP heavyweight champion

3 TRIPLE-H
269, Greenwich, CT
(1) WWE Raw champion

4 BROCK LESNAR
295, Minneapolis, MN
(2) No. 1 contender: WWE Smackdown title

5 KENTA KOBASHI
282, Fukuchiyama, Japan
(3) GHC heavyweight champion

6 A.J. STYLES
202, Gainesville, GA
(4) NWA heavyweight champion

7 BILL GOLDBERG
283, Tulsa, OK
(10) No. 1 contender: WWE Raw title

8 EDDIE GUERRERO
223, El Paso, TX
(–) WWE U.S. champion

9 BOOKER T
250, Houston, TX
(–) WWE Intercontinental champion

10 JOHN CENA
260, Los Angeles, CA
(–) No. 2 contender: WWE Smackdown title

A.J. Styles

TAG TEAMS

1 SHELTON BENJAMIN & CHARLIE HAAS
Combined weight: 510 pounds
(4) WWE Smackdown tag team champions

2 RENE DUPREE & SYLVAN GRENIER
Combined weight: 504 pounds
(2) WWE Raw tag team champions

3 CHRIS HARRIS & JAMES STORM
Combined weight: 516 pounds
(9) NWA tag team champions

4 TAMON HONDA & KENTA KOBASHI
Combined weight: 547 pounds
(7) GHC tag team champions

5 BUH BUH RAY & D-VON DUDLEY
Combined weight: 579 pounds
(–) No. 1 contenders: WWE Raw tag title

6 HIROSHI TANAHASHI & YUTAKA YOSHIE
Combined weight: 484 pounds
(–) IWGP International tag team champions

7 BILLY KIDMAN & REY MISTERIO JR.
Combined weight: 398 pounds
(–) No. 1 contenders: WWE Smackdown tag title

8 SIMON DIAMOND & JOHNNY SWINGER
Combined weight: 461 pounds
(–) No. 1 contenders: NWA tag title

9 KEIJI MUTO & ARASHI
Combined weight: 471 pounds
(10) All-Japan International tag team champions

10 BRADSHAW & RON SIMMONS
Combined weight: 582 pounds
(–) No. 2 contenders: WWE Smackdown tag title

WWE RAW

Raw Champion:
TRIPLE-H
(C) 269, Greenwich, CT

1—BILL GOLDBERG
(2) 283, Tulsa, OK
2—BOOKER T
(5) 250, Houston, TX
3—CHRIS JERICHO
(6) 225, Winnipeg, Manitoba
4—KEVIN NASH
(1) 303, Detroit, MI
5—RANDY ORTON
(8) 265, St. Louis, MO
6—SHAWN MICHAELS
(–) 217, San Antonio, TX
7—ROB VAN DAM
(–) 237, Battle Creek, MI
8—KANE
(4) 326, St. Louis, MO
9—CHRISTIAN
(3) 225, Toronto, Ontario
10—SCOTT STEINER
(7) 275, Detroit, MI

WWE SMACKDOWN

Smackdown Champion:
KURT ANGLE
(5) 233, Pittsburgh, PA

1—BROCK LESNAR
(C) 295, Minneapolis, MN
2—EDDIE GUERRERO
(–) 223, El Paso, TX
3—JOHN CENA
(3) 260, Los Angeles, CA
4—THE BIG SHOW
(1) 485, Aiken, SC
5—THE UNDERTAKER
(4) 304, Dallas, TX
6—CHRIS BENOIT
(6) 224, Edmonton, Alberta
7—REY MISTERIO JR.
(2) 163, San Diego, CA
8—RHYNO
(7) 275, Detroit, MI
9—TAJIRI
(–) 213, Tokyo, Japan
10—MATT HARDY
(8) 220, Cameron, NC

OVW

OVW Champion:
DAMAJA
(1) 251, Seymour, IN

1—ROB CONWAY
(3) 240, Pittsburgh, PA
2—NICK DINSMORE
(2) 226, Jefferson, IN
3—MARK HENRY
(8) 372, Austin, TX
4—MATT MORGAN
(6) 330, Fairfield, CT
5—MARK MAGNUS
(7) 231, Syracuse, NY
6—JOHNNY JETER
(4) 218, San Diego, CA
7—BIG BAD JOHN
(–) 320, New Orleans, LA
8—CHRIS CAGE
(–) 220, Youngstown, OH
9—RENE DUPREE
(–) 250, Montreal, Quebec
10—TANK TOLAND
(–) 220, Margate, NJ

RING OF HONOR

ROH Champion:
SAMOA JOE
(C) 270, American Samoa

1—CHRISTOPHER DANIELS
(2) 210, Los Angeles, CA
2—HOMICIDE
(3) 220, Brooklyn, NY
3—C.M. PUNK
(7) 220, Chicago, IL
4—A.J. STYLES
(5) 202, Gainesville, GA
5—LOW-KI
(–) 170, Brooklyn, NY
6—MATT STRYKER
(4) 220, Cincinnati, OH
7—B.J. WHITMER
(–) 210, Owensboro, KY
8—DANNY MAFF
(6) 245, Brooklyn, NY
9—RAVEN
(9) 243, Short Hills, NJ
10—JEFF HARDY
(–) 216, Cameron, NC

Top 10 and Tag Team ratings are based on won-lost records for the past month, quality of opposition, and inherent skill of each wrestler or team. These ratings are compiled by the magazine's editorial board. All other ratings are based on the official current positions of challengers to the top title in each category; certain titleholders receive an automatic spot in the ratings. The number in parentheses indicates a wrestler's position in that category last issue; (-) indicates that the wrestler was not rated in that category last issue. while (C) indicates the wrestler was champion in that category last issue.

CHIKARA: Champion—Hallowicked; **1**—Mike Quackenbush; **2**—Jigsaw; **3**—Blind Rage; **4**—Icarus; **5**—Gran Akuma; **6**—Sumie Sakai; **7**—Rorschach; **8**—UltraMantis; **9**—Mister ZERO; **10**—Mercedes Martinez.

DESTRUCTION CHAMPIONSHIP WRESTLING: Champion—Bull Buchanan; **1**—Big John Thundercloud; **2**—Lefletcha; **3**—Slick; **4**—Aaron Devil; **5**—Tre G; **6**—Playboy Tripp; **7**—The Big Law Man; **8**—Hangtime; **9**—Triple Thrilla; **10**—Steve Michaels.

EAST COAST WRESTLING ASSOCIATION: Champion—Christopher Daniels; **1**—Prince Nana; **2**—Cheetah Master; **3**—Mike Kruel; **4**—Low-Ki; **5**—Japanese Pool Boy; **6**—John Walters; **7**—Ace Darling; **8**—Mr. Ooh La La; **9**—Johnny Maxx; **10**—Mozart Fontaine.

GLOBAL CHAMPIONSHIP WRESTLING: Champion—Night Prowler; **1**—Vinny V; **2**—Dan Sawyer; **3**—Buff Bagwell; **4**—J.J. Steele; **5**—Guff Grayson; **6**—Inhuman Fly; **7**—Rod Fairfax; **8**—Theodore Tutweiler III; **9**—Scotty Riggs; **10**—Mason Fury.

INDEPENDENT WRESTLING FEDERATION: Champion—Fred Sampson; **1**—Kevin Knight; **2**—Roman; **3**—Hadrian; **4**—Biggie Biggs; **5**—The Patriot; **6**—Shawn Donovan; **7**—Brandon Young; **8**—Mikhail Verow; **9**—Shane O'Brien; **10**—Tommy Trouble.

IPW HARDCORE WRESTLING: Champion—Scoot Andrews; **1**—Lex Lovett; **2**—Steve Madison; **3**—Rod Steel; **4**—Billy Fives; **5**—Agent Steele; **6**—Mike Sullivan; **7**—Navy Seal; **8**—Norman Smiley; **9**—Danny Doring; **10**—J.R. Ryder.

NWA VIRGINIA: Champion—Preston Quinn; **1**—Phil Brown; **2**—Magic; **3**—Sean Lei; **4**—Sonjay Dutt; **5**—Nikita Allanov; **6**—Dirty Money; **7**—Mike Thomas; **8**—Biggie Biggs; **9**—Jacey North; **10**—Brandon Day.

PROFESSIONAL CHAMPIONSHIP WRESTLING: Champion—Shadow; **1**—Sabu; **2**—Jared Steele; **3**—Mike Foxx; **4**—Steve DeMarco; **5**—Justin 2 Fine; **6**—Gabe Roach; **7**—Chris Stevens; **8**—C-Diddy; **9**—Brett Barnes; **10**—B.J. Cummings.

SOUTHWEST WRESTLING FEDERATION: Champion—Mr. Taylor; **1**—Scott Summers; **2**—Darin Childs; **3**—Jerry Lynn; **4**—Kid Kash; **5**—Enigma; **6**—Johnny Grunge; **7**—La Parka; **8**—Konnan; **9**—Seth Shai; **10**—Kris Childs.

TRANS WORLD WRESTLING ALLIANCE: Champion—Skeeter McCoy; **1**—Tom Brandi; **2**—Jerry Lawler; **3**—D-Lo Brown; **4**—Demolition Ax; **5**—Johnny Graham; **6**—Saboth; **7**—Hacksaw Duggan; **8**—J-Money; **9**—Dave Patera; **10**—Shane Shadows.

WORLD CLASS EXTREME WRESTLING: Champion—The Stro; **1**—Aaron Devil; **2**—David Young; **3**—Malaki; **4**—Steve Michaels; **5**—The Barbarian; **6**—Deacon; **7**—Tyrone Knox; **8**—The Big Law Man; **9**—Indian Outlaw; **10**—Randy B. Studdly.

XTREME CHAMPIONSHIP WRESTLING: Champion—Krusher Kong; **1**—John Allen; **2**—Gemini; **3**—Hellraiser Hark; **4**—Scott Phoenix; **5**—Bull; **6**—Epi the Phat Samoan; **7**—Khris Germany; **8**—Kit Carson; **9**—Mike Thunder; **10**—Chuy Lopez.

NWA

NWA Champion:
A.J. STYLES
(C) 202, Gainesville, GA

1—D-LO BROWN
(-) 281, Chicago, IL
2—JEFF JARRETT
(3) 230, Nashville, TN
3—HOTSTUFF HERNANDEZ
(1) 280, Houston, TX
4—RAVEN
(8) 243, Short Hills, NJ
5—RICKY MURDOCH
(2) 261, Houston, TX
6—BRIAN JEWEL
(-) 265, Shediac, New Brunswick
7—JOHNNY MOSS
(5) 240, Egremont, England
8—STEVE CORINO
(-) 219, Sea Isle City, NJ
9—PREDATOR
(-) 307, Pittsburgh, PA
10—CHRIS SABIN
(-) 207, Hell, MI

NWA-TNA

NWA Champion:
A.J. STYLES
(C) 202, Gainesville, GA

1—D-LO BROWN
(5) 281, Chicago, IL
2—CHRIS SABIN
(1) 207, Hell, MI
3—JEFF JARRETT
(2) 230, Nashville, TN
4—RAVEN
(3) 243, Short Hills, NJ
5—FRANKIE KAZARIAN
(10) 220, Yucca Valley, CA
6—KID KASH
(7) 202, Johnson City, TN
7—JERRY LYNN
(6) 216, Minneapolis, MN
8—LEGEND
(-) 265, Toronto, Ontario
9—CHRISTOPHER DANIELS
(-) 210, Los Angeles, CA
10—MICHAEL SHANE
(-) 221, San Antonio, TX

JAPAN

1—YOSHIHIRO TAKAYAMA
(3) 270, Sapporo, Japan
IWGP heavyweight champion
2—KENTA KOBASHI
(1) 282, Fukuchiyama, Japan
GHC heavyweight champion
3—SHINYA HASHIMOTO
(2) 287, Gifu, Japan
All-Japan Triple Crown champion
4—KENSUKE SASAKI
(-) 251, Tokyo, Japan
5—TIGER MASK IV
(7) 170, Uruyasu, Japan
6—YUJI NAGATA
(4) 228, Tokyo, Japan
7—KEIJI MUTO
(5) 245, Yamanashi, Japan
8—MASA CHONO
(9) 235, Tokyo, Japan
9—MITSUHARU MISAWA
(10) 228, Ashikaga, Japan
10—KOJI KANEMOTO
(-) 205, Osaka, Japan

MEXICO

1—MR. NIEBLA
(3) 185, Cualtitlan, Mexico
2—HECTOR GARZA
(4) 220, Monterrey, Mexico
3—FELINO
(-) 165, Mexico City, Mexico
4—HEAVY METAL
(-) 180, Mexico City, Mexico
5—MR. AGUILA
(-) 212, Guadalajara, Mexico
6—BLACK TIGER
(8) 193, Mexico City, Mexico
7—DR. WAGNER JR.
(6) 215, Mexico City, Mexico
8—SHOCKER
(1) 185, Guadalajara, Mexico
9—LA PARKA
(-) 235, Torreon, Mexico
10—BLUE PANTHER
(-) 215, Mexico City, Mexico

ratings analysis

Every month, this column will tell fans how we go about rating over 200 wrestlers in 22 different categories. It is a behind-the-scenes look at the most important–and respected–ratings system in the sport. This column is vital reading for all wrestling fans.

Is the end near? Many insiders were lamenting just before we went to press that the end for All-Japan Pro Wrestling appeared to be very near. Reportedly, a number of front office employees had already left the company, and the big financial picture was looking pretty ugly. Whether the majority of the blame for the apparent collapse of a company with such a long and proud history behind it (most of it, of course, under the leadership of the legendary **Shohei "Giant" Baba**) deserves to fall on the shoulders of President **Keiji Muto** is certainly debatable. Despite his advancing age and chronically injured knees, Muto is arguably the promotion's top star in the ring, but many have questioned some of his decision-making since he took control in the office.

All-Japan's desperate struggle for survival isn't, however, the reason why Triple Crown champion **Shinya Hashimoto** has been left out of our Top 10 in this issue. There were reports coming out of Japan several weeks before press time that Hashimoto had been forced to vacate the Triple Crown because of an arm injury (not to mention his bad knees). As things turned out, although Hashimoto strongly considered giving it up (something that isn't done unless absolutely necessary), he ultimately chose to gut it out for as long as possible. Since that meant he would only wrestle the big matches he had on his schedule, we decided he had not been active enough to warrant getting ranked in the Top 10 this time.

Shinya Hashimoto

The state of tag team wrestling (briefly). Basically, it seems to vary greatly, sometimes from month to month, at least where WWE is concerned. In some months, there are numerous formidable teams pursuing the Raw and Smackdown tag titles. But as July turned to August in 2003, the landscape was looking pretty darn barren.

Only two tag teams from the Raw brand made our Top 10, champions **Sylvan Grenier** and **Rene Dupree**, and **Buh Buh Ray** and **D-Von Dudley**, who were in the midst of a formulaic feud if there ever was one. And only three from the Smackdown side made the cut. But let's take a closer look at both sides.

To point out the lack of depth on the Raw side, we should tell you that we had to think for a while before we could come up with the number-two contenders to the Raw tag team gold. It would probably be **Garrison Cade** and **Mark Jindrak**, but their non-title win over **La Resistance** notwithstanding, do you see them a major players in WWE?

Although **Billy Kidman** and **Rey Misterio Jr.** are listed as the top contenders to the Smackdown tag title (mostly by virtue of their strong performance against strong champions **Shelton Benjamin** and **Charlie Haas** at Vengeance), a heel turn by Kidman seemed to be in the works. Assuming he does turn heel, that would be three promising Smackdown tandems broken up in a violent way in just a few months (**Chris Benoit** and **Rhyno**, and **Eddie Guerrero** and **Tajiri** would be the others). Plus the number-two contenders, **Bradshaw** and **Ron Simmons**, haven't seemed all that interested in winning titles since returning to WWE competition. They just like to drink beer and beat people up. After that, you have **Spanky** and **Funaki**, various incarnations of **The Full-Blooded Italians**, and **The Basham Brothers**, all not exactly strong title threats at this point.

At least we're seeing a very good new tag team war in NWA-TNA, and this one might last a long time. NWA tag champs **America's Most Wanted**—**Chris Harris** and **James Storm**—are getting the challenge of their careers from **Simon Diamond** and **Johnny Swinger**.

Simon Diamond

Swinger was once a lower-card wrestler for WCW, but he and Diamond showed a lot of potential as a team in ECW. Unfortunately, they were mostly a comedy act there and never moved up very high on cards. They have continued teaming on a part-time basis on the independent circuit since then, and TNA officials are giving them a real chance to shine. AMW has gotten the best of Diamond and Swinger so far, but just barely. Following a loss at the August 6 TNA pay-per-view, the challengers stole the belts, so this is far from over. That should be good news to every fan who enjoys old school tag team wrestling.

That's all for now! As always, if you have any questions or comments regarding our ratings or what you see here, we want to hear from you. Write to: "Ratings Analysis," c/o *PWI*, Box 1148, Fort Washington, PA 19034. □

THE Wrestling ANALYST

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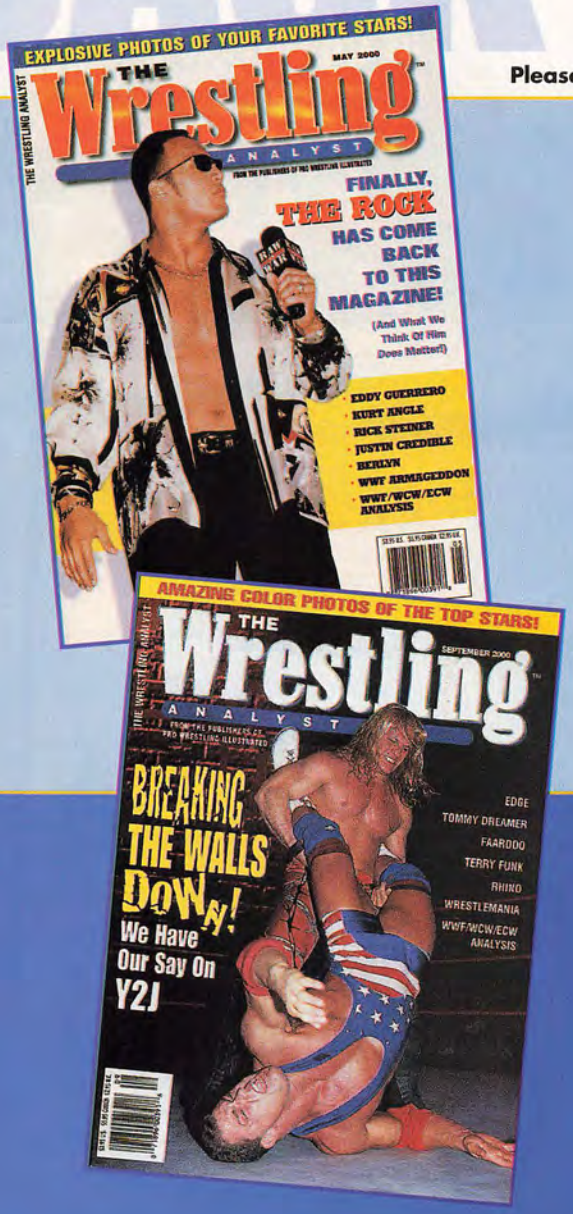

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- ☐ **Nov. 1998:** Bill Goldberg, Eddie Guerrero, Mark Mero, Headbangers, Brian Christopher, Lance Storm, D-Lo Brown, Bash at the Beach.
- ☐ **Jan. 1999:** Owen Hart , Bret Hart, Jeff Jarrett, Disco Inferno, Taka Michinoku, Chris Candido, Fit Finlay, SummerSlam.
- ☐ **March 1999:** New Age Outlaws, Mark Henry, The Giant, D.O.A., 2 Cold Scorpio, Tracy Smothers, Halloween Havoc.
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- ☐ **July 1999:** Vince McMahon, Dudleys, Billy Kidman, Goldust, Konnan, Dan Severn, Valentine's Day Massacre, WWF-WCW-ECW.
- ☐ **Sept. 1999:** Sable, Triple-H, Chris Benoit, Juventud Guerrera, Jerry Lynn, Bossman, Norman Smiley, WWF-WCW-ECW.
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- ☐ **Jan. 2000:** Hulk Hogan, Steve Austin, Bruno Sammartino, Bob Backlund, Bret Hart, Shawn Michaels, Pedro Morales, Randy Savage.
- ☐ **March 2000:** Chyna, Sid Vicious, Steve Blackman, Yoshihiro Tajiri, Barry Windham, Unforgiven, WWF-WCW-ECW.
- ☐ **May 2000:** The Rock, Eddie Guerrero, Kurt Angle, Rick Steiner, Justin Credible, Berlyn, Armageddon, WWF-WCW-ECW.
- ☐ **July 2000:** Rikishi, Test, Madusa, Mike Awesome, Meng, Albert, Royal Rumble, WWF-WCW-ECW.
- ☐ **Sept. 2000:** Chris Jericho, Edge, Tommy Dreamer, Terry Funk, Rhino, WrestleMania, WWF-WCW-ECW.

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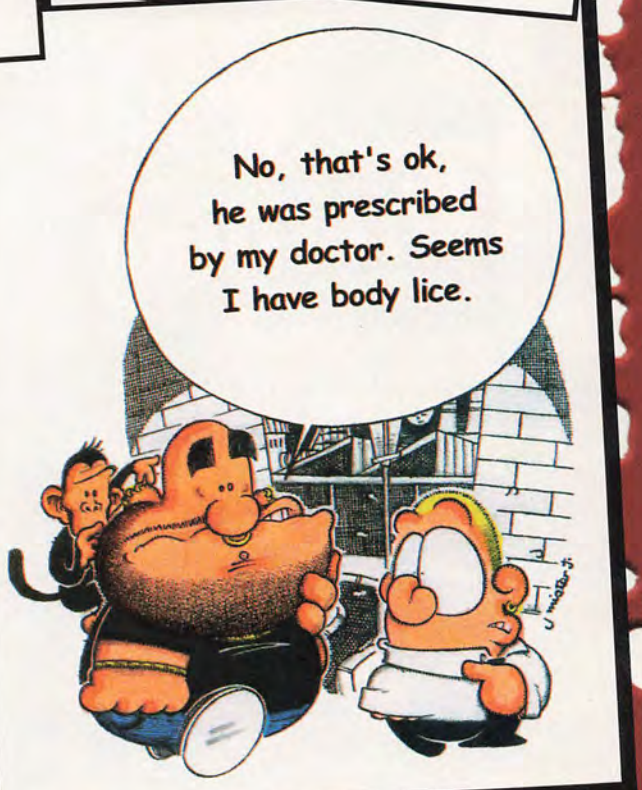
Drawing Blood

By Jason Conlan

Scott, we at character development have come up with a great idea to get you over, and cash in on the Hulk craze at the same time. So put these torn up pants on, while I spray paint you green and explain further.

Mister J proving his TV detective skills are possibly not what they should be.



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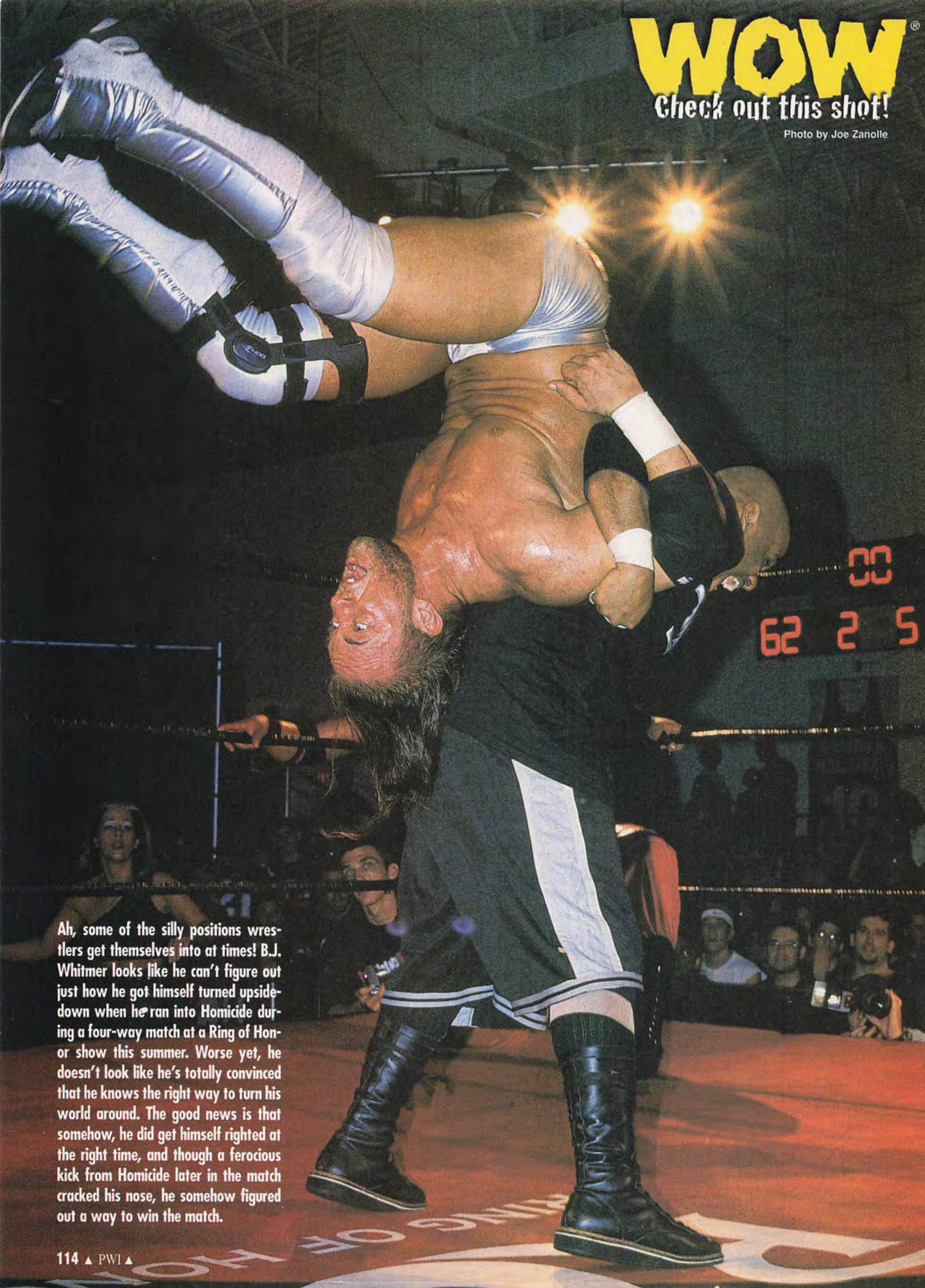

Ah, some of the silly positions wrestlers get themselves into at times! B.J. Whitmer looks like he can't figure out just how he got himself turned upside-down when he ran into Homicide during a four-way match at a Ring of Honor show this summer. Worse yet, he doesn't look like he's totally convinced that he knows the right way to turn his world around. The good news is that somehow, he did get himself righted at the right time, and though a ferocious kick from Homicide later in the match cracked his nose, he somehow figured out a way to win the match.

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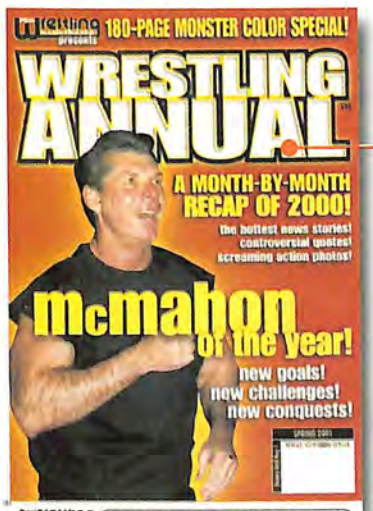
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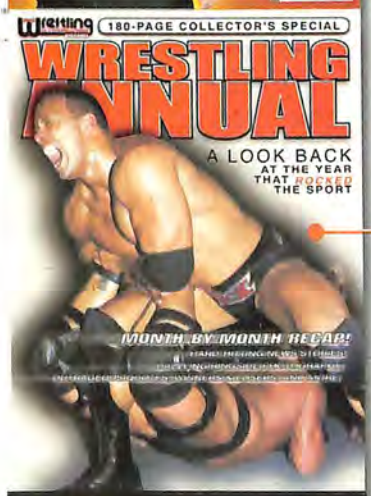

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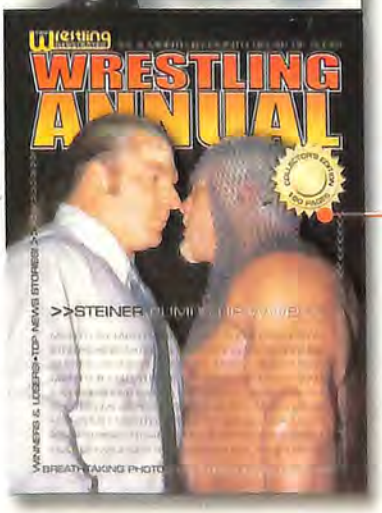

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